OLIVIA WILDE AUBREY PLAZA E.T. AT 40

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SMARTER MOVIE MAGAZINE

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THE BEST MOVIE ENDINGS EVER!

"This final moment between the Final Girl and Michael Myers has to come, and there will be blood."
JAMIE LEE CURTIS

EXCLUSIVE!

HALLOWEEN ENDS

THE ULTIMATE SHOWDOWN AS LAURIE STRODE GETS HER KILLER FINALE

CALL JANE

EMMA MACKEY
On Sex Education, Emily and Barbie

KEVIN SMITH
On fear, fighting and chocolate-covered pretzels

THE MENU

PLUS BILLY EICHNER'S GAME-CHANGER | PALME D'OR GOLD
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FUTURE

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Welcome to

TOTAL FILM

THE SMARTER MOVIE MAGAZINE

If you want to see women taking charge and changing their destiny, look no further than this issue. Laurie Strode (the always-fun-to-interview Jamie Lee Curtis) is about to lay her particular brand of Final Girl to rest in the last (or is it?) Michael Myers stabbing-spree instalment, *Halloween Ends*. She had a lot to say about what Laurie stands for when news ed Jordan caught up with her – and she's not the only feminist determined to change things in this issue's pages. I talked to Olivia Wilde about her new film, *Don't Worry Darling*, which was hard to do given the spoilery nature of the big takeaways from watching it. But we still managed to complain about the heat, discuss sex scenes (why so little oral for women in mainstream cinema?) and the 'assholes' she's worked with through the years who've taught her how *not* to run a set. Talking to her in Berlin was genuinely inspiring as we got stuck into the patriarchy, female body autonomy and how we only have, on average, around 4,000 weeks of life to live so we better make the most of them. This issue, I can assure you, is a great use of your time…

Enjoy the issue!

Jane

JANE CROWTHER, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
@TOTALFILM_JANE

CALL SHEET

THIS ISSUE'S EXTRAS

NEWS EDITOR
JORDAN FARLEY
@JORDANFARLEY

It was a real honour to close the loop on Laurie Strode with Jamie Lee Curtis for our *Halloween Ends* feature. She gave me an "A++ with extra credit" for one of my questions, which I will be dining out on till I retire.

DEPUTY EDITOR
MATT MAYTUM
@MATTMAYTUM

Interviewing Emma Mackey gave me the excuse to finally catch up with *Sex Education* S3 – in one sitting. Time well spent, I'd say. Read what she had to say about *Emily* and *Barbie* on page 58.

CONTRIBUTOR
ASHANTI OMKAR
@ASHANTIOMKAR

I had the pleasure of attending the *House Of The Dragon* premiere in Leicester Square and sitting on the throne at the centre stage for a moment. A grand affair

CONTRIBUTING EDITOR
JAMES MOTTRAM
@JAMESMOTTRAM

Palme d'Or winner Ruben Östlund told me *Triangle Of Sadness*' argument scene was based on a row he had with his now-wife. The 50-euro note stuck in a lift shaft in Cannes might still be there.

CONTRIBUTING EDITOR
LEILA LATIF
@LEILA_LATIF

Congratulations were in order for Aubrey Plaza who had got married and been cast in the new Francis Ford Coppola film since I last interviewed her. She said she manifested both under a "super full blood moon".

HOLLYWOOD CORRESPONDENT
ADAM TANSWELL
@ADAMTANSWELL

The film geek in me always gets a thrill walking around the Sony Pictures lot in LA. Enjoyed my time in the edit bay for *Lyle, Lyle, Crocodile* and my quick spot of the Ecto-1 as I walked back to my car.

Contents

#329 OCTOBER 2022

THIS ISSUE

32 HALLOWEEN ENDS
Jamie Lee Curtis and David Gordon Green on the night he came home… for the last time. Plus, James Jude Courtney on how he gets into The Shape.

44 GREATEST ENDINGS
We jump to conclusions to salute the best film finales.

52 BROS
Billy Eichner and Nicholas Stoller on their ground-breaking bromcom.

58 EMMA MACKEY
New Maeve. *TF* meets the *Sex Education* star to talk *Emily* and *Barbie*.

62 DECISION TO LEAVE
Director Park Chan-wook unpacks his genre-defying Oscar hopeful.

66 EMILY THE CRIMINAL
Aubrey Plaza commits the perfect crime in her latest acting/producing gig.

70 CALL JANE
How to turn a story about harrowing circumstances into feelgood inspiration.

110 SPIELBERG ON E.T.
Raiding the vaults to see what Steven Spielberg said about his alien pal 40 years ago.

EVERY ISSUE

3 EDITOR'S LETTER
The team's shenanigans.

74 TOTAL FILM INTERVIEW
Olivia proves she's still Wilde at heart.

128 DIALOGUE
You write. We reply.

TEASERS

7 TRIANGLE OF SADNESS
Ruben Östlund's hilariously pointed satire.

11 THE MENU
Be Ralph Fiennes' guest for a twisted culinary thriller.

12 YOU TALKIN' TO ME?
Clerks III director Kevin Smith faces the film quotes.

14 THE BANSHEES OF INISHERIN
Colin Farrell, Brendan Gleeson and Martin McDonagh are not in Bruges anymore…

26 WELCOME TO CHIPPENDALES
Kumail Nanjiani and co strip back the story.

28 IT SHOULDN'T HAPPEN TO A FILM JOURNALIST
Our Jamie on the terror of compiling a top 10.

31 CHARLOTTE RAMPLING
On risks, Robert De Niro and *Dune: Part Two*.

TOTAL FILM BUFF

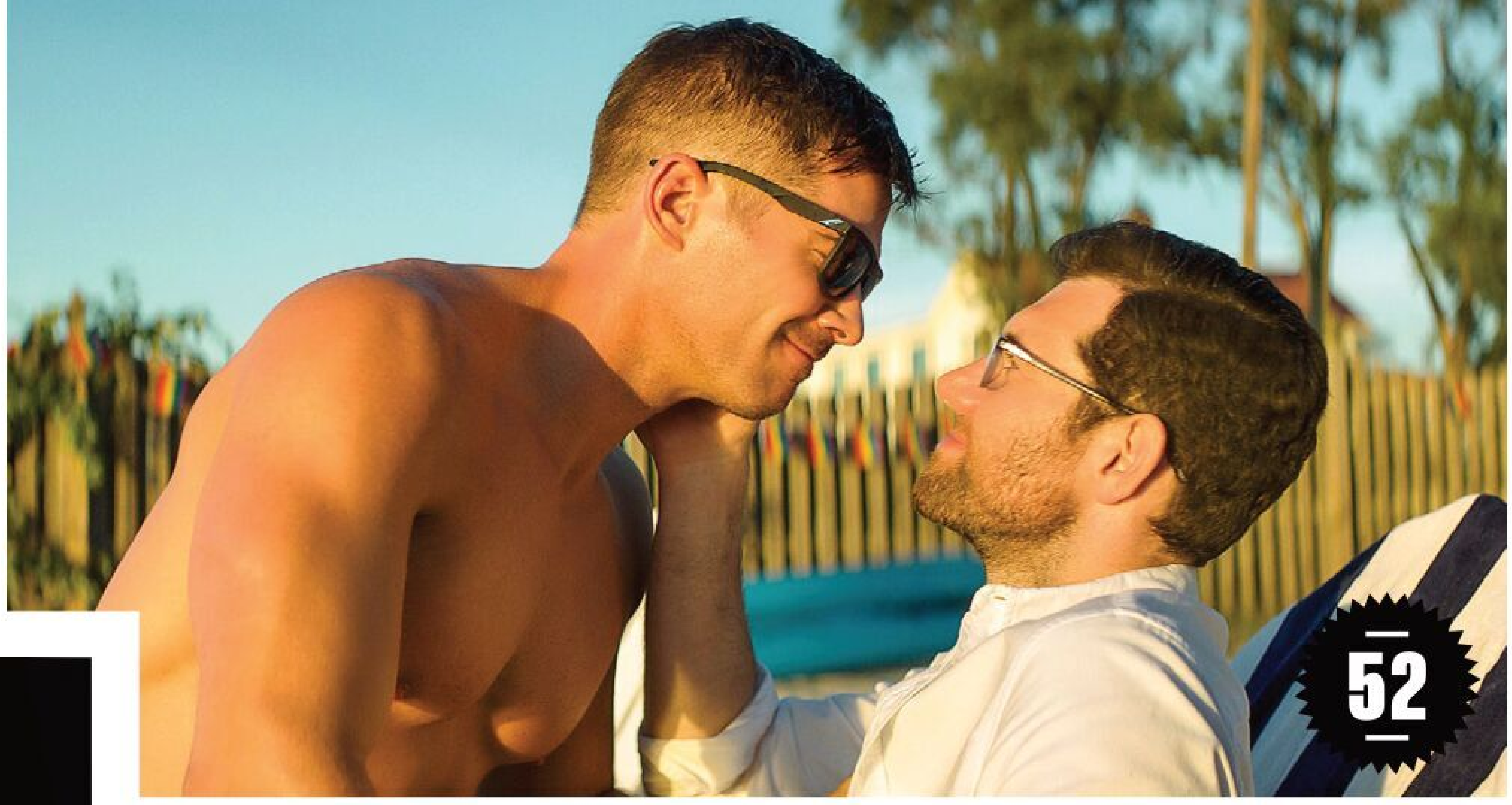
106 IS IT BOLLOCKS?
Is *Bullet Train*'s boomslang a real threat? Or a whole clot of rubbish?

107 10 OF THE BEST
Cocktails! From shaken and stirred, to slurped from a can on the train.

120 OBITUARIES
Bidding a fond farewell to Olivia Newton-John, Anne Heche and Wolfgang Petersen.

124 INTERMISSION
A *TF* writer sheds light on horror's healing power.

SCAN TO GET OUR WEEKLY NEWSLETTER



‘WE’RE CULMINATING 44 YEARS OF THIS EXPERIENCE BETWEEN LAURIE STRODE AND THE SHAPE’

TILL DEATH DO THEM PART
Michael Myers is back for a final stab at Laurie Strode and, naturally, there will be blood.

SCREEN

84 DON’T WORRY DARLING
Pugh, what a scorcher? Or all Styles, no substance?

86 MOONAGE DAYDREAM
David Bowie doc is far from a godawful small affair.

87 THE LOST KING
Could this Richard III yarn be an awards contender? Remains to be seen.

87 FUNNY PAGES
Portrait of the comic-book artist as a young man.

88 MRS. HARRIS GOES TO PARIS
[*Booming trailer voice*] “Academy Award nominee Lesley Manville is… THE DIOR HUNTER.”

89 AFTER YANG
Colin Farrell has some robot-childcare issues.

90 CATHERINE CALLED BIRDY
Dunham gets medieval on the teen-movie genre.

91 FLUX GOURMET
‘Sonic catering’? Hope no hedgehogs were harmed.

92 SEE HOW THEY RUN
It’s Theatreland of blood in this 1950s-set caper.

95 CLERKS III
Another Quick Stop on Kevin Smith’s cine-journey.

97 JACKIE BROWN
Absolutely, positively has to be seen on the big screen.

98 THE PIANO
Jane Campion’s 1993 awards magnet gets a 4K tune-up.

100 CLASSIC TV
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102 SOUNDTRACKS
The best of Harold F.

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TEASERS

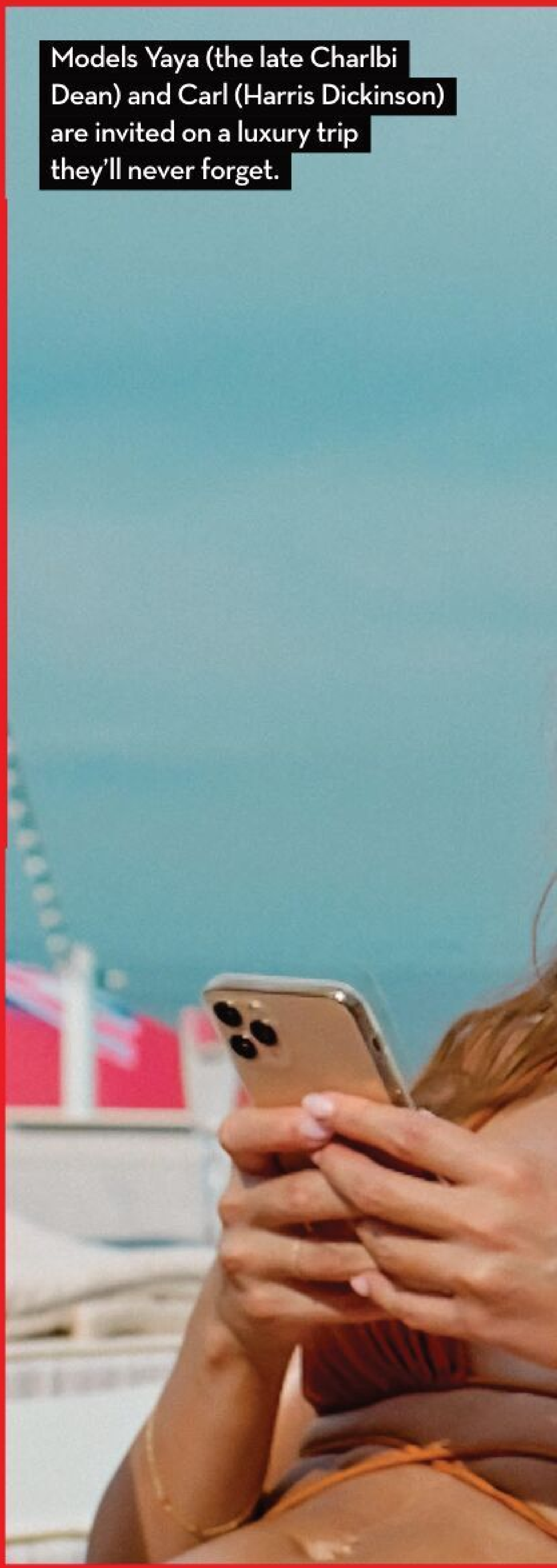
SICKENINGLY RICH

TRIANGLE OF SADNESS Ruben Östlund's queasy Cannes-winner turns on the one per cent...

I pushed it as far as I could," says Ruben Östlund, talking about his new film *Triangle Of Sadness*. "I didn't have any limit. I wanted to do the first film scene in the world where someone actually is shitting and throwing up at the same time. And I have never seen that before." Neither has *Teasers*. In a sequence that makes Mr. Creosote's vomiting in *Monty Python's The Meaning Of Life* look like a mild case of indigestion, passengers on a luxury yacht buffeted by a violent storm are soon hurling their haute cuisine. And it goes on. And on. And on.

Then again, this should be no surprise. This is the Swedish director of *The Square*, the scathing satirical stab at the art world that took home Cannes' Palme d'Or in 2017. That Östlund repeated the trick this year for *Triangle...*, joining that rarefied group of filmmakers to twice win Cannes' top prize, confirms him as one of world cinema's hottest directors. This time, he aims his broadsides at the super-wealthy, in a story that has echoes of *The Admirable Crichton*, the 1957 comedy in which a group of aristos are shipwrecked and turn to their butler to help them survive.

The starting point came after Östlund's wife, who works as a fashion photographer, gave insight into the industry – in particular the way male models are treated. "They have to deal with the fact that their sexuality and their beauty is a currency. And it can be a door-opener. If you sleep with the right, powerful homosexual guy in the industry, it can be a door-opener



Models Yaya (the late Charlbi Dean) and Carl (Harris Dickinson) are invited on a luxury trip they'll never forget.

The film examines hierarchies of passengers (Sunnyi Melles) and staff (Alicia Eriksson).

➾ that makes a career push. So since I wrote a lot of the script during Me Too, it was just a mirror of what was going on for women in this world."

It led to the creation of Carl, a male model played by British actor Harris Dickinson (*The King's Man*). "Ruben is very wonderful at picking holes in our behaviour and our egos and I think with this character I really had to try and let go of that," says Dickinson. "And allow myself to be pathetic, and offer myself up as a piece of meat." After the film opens at a fashion cattle-call, together with his model-influencer girlfriend Yaya (Charlbi Dean, whose unexpected death aged 32 following a sudden illness was announced as *TF* went to press), Carl's invited on a cruise populated by an ultra-rich array of oligarchs, entrepreneurs and arms dealers.

With the ship run by a Marxist captain (Woody Harrelson) with a drinking problem, the story flips on its head after the aforementioned storm leaves a handful of survivors stranded. "I thought it would be fun to have a movie that takes place first in the fashion world, then on a luxury yacht and then on a deserted island," says Östlund. "Don't you want to click on that? That was my idea. To look at hierarchies and structures. There are such strong hierarchies on a yacht and in the fashion world... to take them away when you get to the deserted island, it made sense for me."

In this case, the equivalent to *The Admirable Crichton*'s butler is the yacht's toilet cleaner Abigail (Dolly de Leon), the only one of the group with the skills to fish for food and keep everyone alive. Suddenly, this lowly domestic worker is in a position of power. "It's interesting to talk about equality and inequality," says Östlund. "My mother, a communist, always talked about when we reach a communistic society, then we will be equal forever. But it doesn't work!"

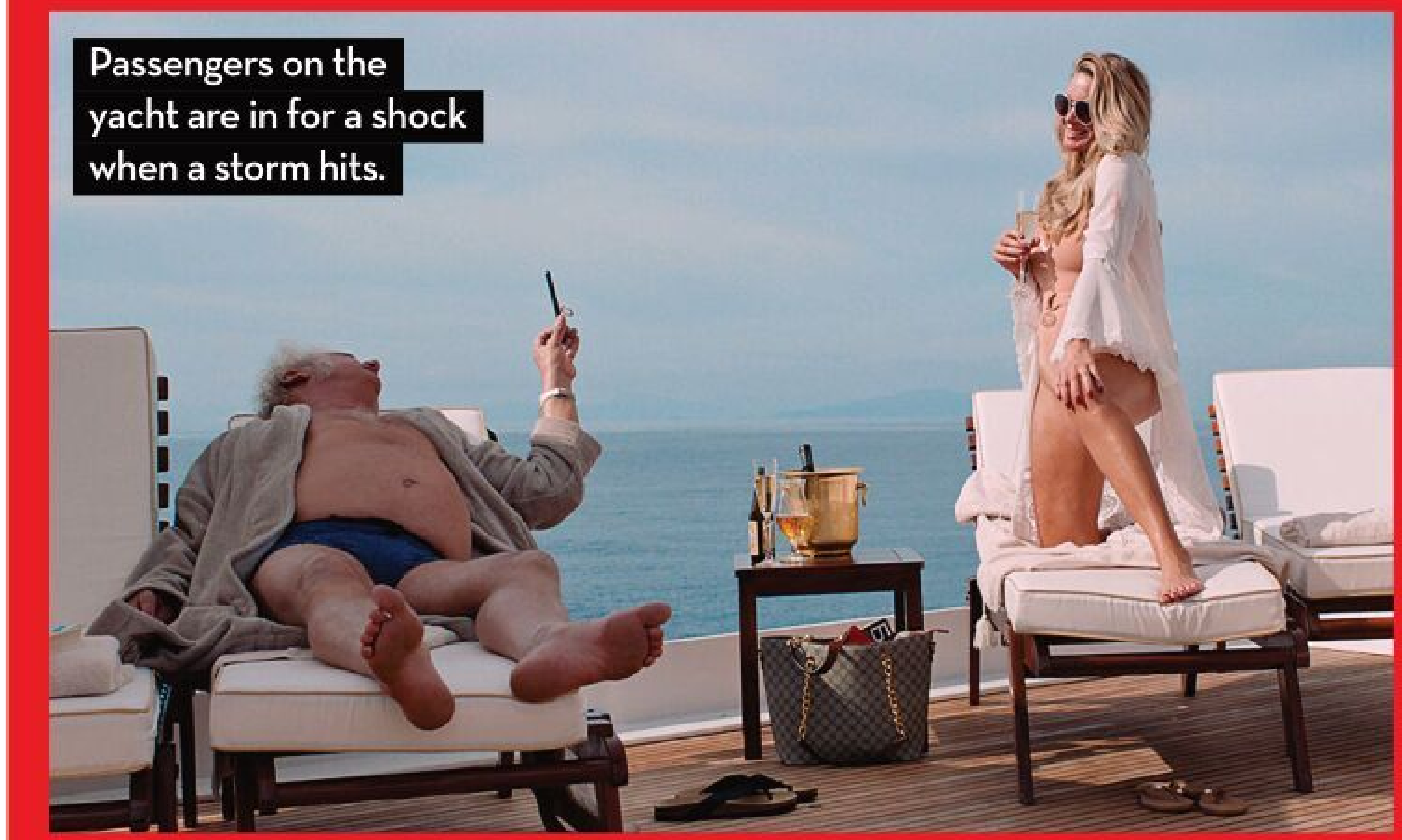
The film's politics come spoken through Harrelson's character. "He knows a lot about Marx," says Östlund of the star. "When I approached him and asked him about the part, it turns out that we have a lot of similar viewpoints on politics. He also did a lot of research, when he got the part, and told me many interesting things that I didn't know about Marx." As Harrelson adds, "I love the character. I do think that, in a lot of ways, he let my character be the voice of some of the message of the film. So that was cool."

But what is that message? Does Östlund hate the rich? On the contrary, he argues. "If you explain the world in a simple way... 'Oh, poor people are nice, they are generous, they take care of each other, and rich people are egoistic and superficial,' it's a cliché, and it's completely wrong. I've met so many billionaires after *The Square*, and they are very nice. But what do you want them to do? Give the money to charity? It's a system thing that we have to deal with."

He feels left-wing intellectuals "have forgotten about Marx", instead believing that problems are individual in nature. "[*There are*] so many Hollywood films where there is one evil capitalist that is abusing power... and if we take him away, everything can continue," he says, rubbishing the very idea. If the film questions the very economic fabric that society is built on, so it should, says Dickinson, who believes audiences in a "post-Covid world" will crave the substance that Östlund delivers. "It's almost like, 'What is gonna matter after this? What are people going to want to see?'And I think and hope that *Triangle...* is one of those films." **JAMES MOTTRAM**

'Ruben is wonderful at picking holes in our behaviour and our egos... I had to allow myself to be pathetic, and offer myself up as a piece of meat'
HARRIS DICKINSON

TRIANGLE OF SADNESS OPENS IN CINEMAS ON 28 OCTOBER.



Passengers on the yacht are in for a shock when a storm hits.

Woody Harrelson plays the heavy-drinking yacht captain.

CURZON

HOT RIGHT NOW

MARGARET QUALLEY IS COEN PLACES...

How fitting to have the creative divorce between the ever-fruitful Coen brothers be dramatically punctuated by Shakespeare. With 2021's *The Tragedy Of Macbeth*, Joel Coen wiggled comfortably in a roomy director chair that once fit two, and now his younger sibling, Ethan, is set to do the same with an untitled project that recently found one of its two leads in the increasingly popular Margaret Qualley.

Professionally trained as a ballerina, Qualley traded dancing for acting in the early 2010s, starring in Gia Coppola's *Palo Alto* in 2013 and landing the role of Jill Garvey in the critically acclaimed HBO TV series *The Leftovers* in 2014. The years that followed were plagued by a run of unremarkable dramas and streaming misfires, a hapless pattern broken by none other than Quentin Tarantino, who cast Qualley as Pussycat, one of the fiery members of the Manson family in his lavish 2019 ensemble piece, *Once Upon A Time... In Hollywood*.

Following this prestigious launchpad, Qualley found her stride. The actor has recently been nominated for a Primetime Emmy for her moving turn in the Netflix drama series *Maid* (where she shares the screen with her A-lister mother, Andie MacDowell) and walked the Cannes Film Festival red carpet earlier this year for Claire Denis' sizzling drama *Stars At Noon*, a role that sees a break from the youthful naivete often shared by her characters.

Recently, Qualley has been working on Coralie Fargeat's *The Substance* alongside Demi Moore and the late Ray Liotta, and also filming Yorgos Lanthimos' *The Favourite* follow-up *Poor Things* with Emma Stone, Mark Ruffalo and Willem Dafoe.

The secret of powering through such a busy schedule, according to Qualley, is connecting to the raw positive energy of a child. "I feel like the big goal in life is to be looking at the world like a kid as much as you possibly can," Qualley told *W* magazine. Her performances, too, share this childlike curiosity, her characteristic big blue eyes hungrily taking in a world that seems more than ready to let her reign. **RAFA SALES ROSS**

POOR THINGS, THE SUBSTANCE AND ETHAN COEN'S UNTITLED PROJECT ARE AWAITING UK RELEASE DATES.

CAMERA PRESS/XAVI GORDO / FIGAROPHOTO

Things are heating up with Ralph Fiennes' Chef Slowik in the kitchen.

EXCLUSIVE

TASTE MANAGEMENT

THE MENU Mark Mylod's starry cast chew on secrets as Ralph Fiennes' chef dishes harsh truths...

Ralph Fiennes and Anya Taylor-Joy lead a delicious cast list.

Foodies are presently getting a tough time of it in cinema. After Welsh folk horror *The Feast* and Peter Strickland's unclassifiable *Flux Gourmet* gave us waves of nausea, now on the menu is, er, *The Menu*. Couple Margot and Tyler (Anya Taylor-Joy, Nicholas Hoult) are among the 12 fine diners who travel to an island for the molecular-gastronomical delights of Chef Slowik (Ralph Fiennes). But might it be their last supper?

"Some of the brilliance of the writing is that it's such a ride – 'And then that and that and *that*,'" says director Mark Mylod, who rightly refuses to give any more away than we see in the unusually secretive trailer. "What I will say is that it's incredibly original. Genuinely. There are obviously influences to every story, but it plays with tropes, with expectations. It's not going to be what you expect."

Mylod is best known for directing six episodes of *Game Of Thrones* and 12 episodes of *Succession*. It was while working on 'Tern Haven', the fifth episode of Season 2 of the latter, that he became friends with scripter Will Tracy. Tracy then showed Mylod the screenplay of *The Menu*, which had initially attracted Alexander Payne. Like *Succession*, *The Menu* skewers privilege – the diners are paying $1,250 per head, and the bones of skeletons in their closets form part of the stew when Chef Slowik's choice of courses unveil a theme pertaining to their pasts – but that's where comparisons end.

"In terms of the genre, the look, the style, they're a million miles apart," says Mylod, who labels his movie as a "dark comedy thriller with elements of horror". And while he agrees that Agatha Christie's *And Then There Were None* is a touchstone, Mylod explains he had a different reference point in mind.

"For me, it was Buñuel… *The Exterminating Angel* [released in 1962]," he says. As in, the idea of trapped wealthy guests descending into crude chaos? "Yes, and also the sense of, 'Maybe I might deserve this.' That's what's unique about Buñuel's film, because it's strange but smacks of a universal truth."

'It's not going to be what you expect'
MARK MYLOD

Truth also played a key part in the creation of Chef Slowik. "Ralph wanted a foundation for the character so I sent him the Grant Achatz episode of *Chef's Table* because I was absolutely floored with Grant's extraordinary courage and absolute obsession with elevating and evolving his art. These leading chefs in molecular gastronomy are performance artists. It's not just about the food. It's the vessels that you eat and drink from, the colour and the texture of the surroundings, the way the light falls into the room. But Slowik isn't [*based on*] one specific person. And the more extreme elements of our chef are obviously completely fictitious!"
JAMIE GRAHAM

THE MENU OPENS IN CINEMAS ON 18 NOVEMBER.

DISNEY

YOU TALKIN' TO ME?

FILM QUOTES POSE AS QUESTIONS. FILM STARS TRY TO COPE.

IN THE CROSSHAIRS THIS MONTH... KEVIN SMITH

Aren't you a little short for a stormtrooper?
I am. I'm height challenged. I always think of Jay and Silent Bob as equal height but when people draw us, they draw Jay as tall and me as this trolly little Hobbit figure and I'm like 'Why?' Then if I ever look at our reflection, I realise he's got a couple of inches on me. I'm not a tall man and I'm hung poorly as well. That's something I've heard every time I've taken my pants down: "You're a little short for a stormtrooper" – and just like them, I misfire all the time.

What are you afraid of?
Irrelevancy, I guess? I used to be afraid of death then I almost died and realised death wasn't that scary. It's just like graduating high school. You have to move on at some point… says the guy who made *Clerks* fucking *III*. The fear of irrelevancy is something that'll keep a motherfucker working. I don't want to be out of the conversation until I'm done with the conversation – and I don't think I'll ever be done with the conversation. I obviously like the sound of my own voice.

Have you ever danced with the devil in the pale moonlight?
Yeah, I'm friends with Jason Mewes. That's like riding a bucking bronco. I think we influenced each other just enough. There's a world where I slipped into Jason's behaviours and we never got anything done and one where he completely slipped into mine and stopped being one of the most interesting people I've ever met. We oddly balance each other, quite like the Joker and Batman. I took enough of his devil and he took enough of my square, for lack of a better word. Taking a little bit of me might have saved his life and taking a little bit of him absolutely made my career. There's so much of Jason in my creative DNA. People think Kevin Smith curses his fool fucking head off but that's the influence of Jason Mewes. What I learned over time, though, was, because he's cute, he gets away with shit. There's absolutely no malice. He may be the devil, he just has no fucking idea he is. He's the devil in diapers, if you will.

How much can you know about yourself if you've never been in a fight?
So true. I'm so not Mr. Confrontation so I don't know anything about myself when it comes to that. My pain threshold is insanely low. Anybody reading this and thinking: 'I'm gonna punch him in the face next time I see him in public,' you will see a 52-year-old man drop to the ground, cower and cry – no, wail – loudly and probably offer you head to get you to stop hitting me. Fellate not fight, that's my campaign motto. If society collapses, I'm fucked. I can't be like, "Let me tell you a story about Ben Affleck." They'd be like, "Cut his leg off and eat it!"

Smith returns as Silent Bob with partner-in-crime Jay (Jason Mewes) in *Clerks III*.

Do you have an off switch?
I don't. I was given the gift of gab. My mom kissed more than my dad's dick, looks like she kissed the Blarney Stone as well, or my dad's dick was the Blarney Stone because I'm very, very chatty. Sooner or later I do power down and watch other people's stuff but the problem there is, as a creator, I feel like I should be working on my shit. It's a vicious cycle. I only turn off during sleep and sex – and sex is so fast, that's like 30 seconds. The generator doesn't even go down when you switch off that quickly. I tend to filibuster my way through my career.

'Do I feel lucky?' Well, do ya, punk?
I do. I never thought this was on the cards for me. I never thought *Clerks* would happen or get picked up and I certainly never thought a career would follow. I feel incredibly blessed – and post-heart attack, I'm like, "Holy shit, what a lucky break." Eighty-per-cent chance of fucking dropping dead and I pull through and get a few more years. I'm living on borrowed time and doing everything I can. I'm not sitting back. I feel a fuck-ton of gratitude, not just for my career but my fucking life. I think that comes from growing up as a fat kid. You're incredibly thankful for every piece of sex you ever get, soberingly grateful, and so it makes sense that it translated into my career.

Would you like a chocolate-covered pretzel?
I would but it has to be vegan. If it's milk chocolate, I'm fucked – but they make vegan dark chocolate-covered pretzels. Periodically, people at Comic Cons will bring me them and I'll be like, "Oh no, I can't. I'm vegan." And they'll be like, "They're vegan, bitch." Then you're forced to eat food from a stranger right in front of them, which is always dicey, to say the least. **SIMON BLAND**

CLERKS III OPENS IN CINEMAS ON 16 SEPTEMBER.

LIONSGATE, GETTY

QUESTIONS TAKEN FROM: STAR WARS: EPISODE IV – A NEW HOPE, CREED, BATMAN, FIGHT CLUB, DEADPOOL, DIRTY HARRY, MALLRATS

EXCLUSIVE

FEAR STREETS

RUN SWEETHEART RUN Ella Balinska is hunted by the demonic embodiment of the patriarchy...

I hope that this movie becomes totally irrelevant in 20 years," says Shana Feste. It's an unusual statement for a writer and director to make about their own work, but Feste has the bigger picture in mind. "This attack on women cannot keep happening. I could have made this movie when I was 20, 30, and it would have been timely. It's one of the reasons that I wanted to make it, because I don't want it to be timely for my daughter."

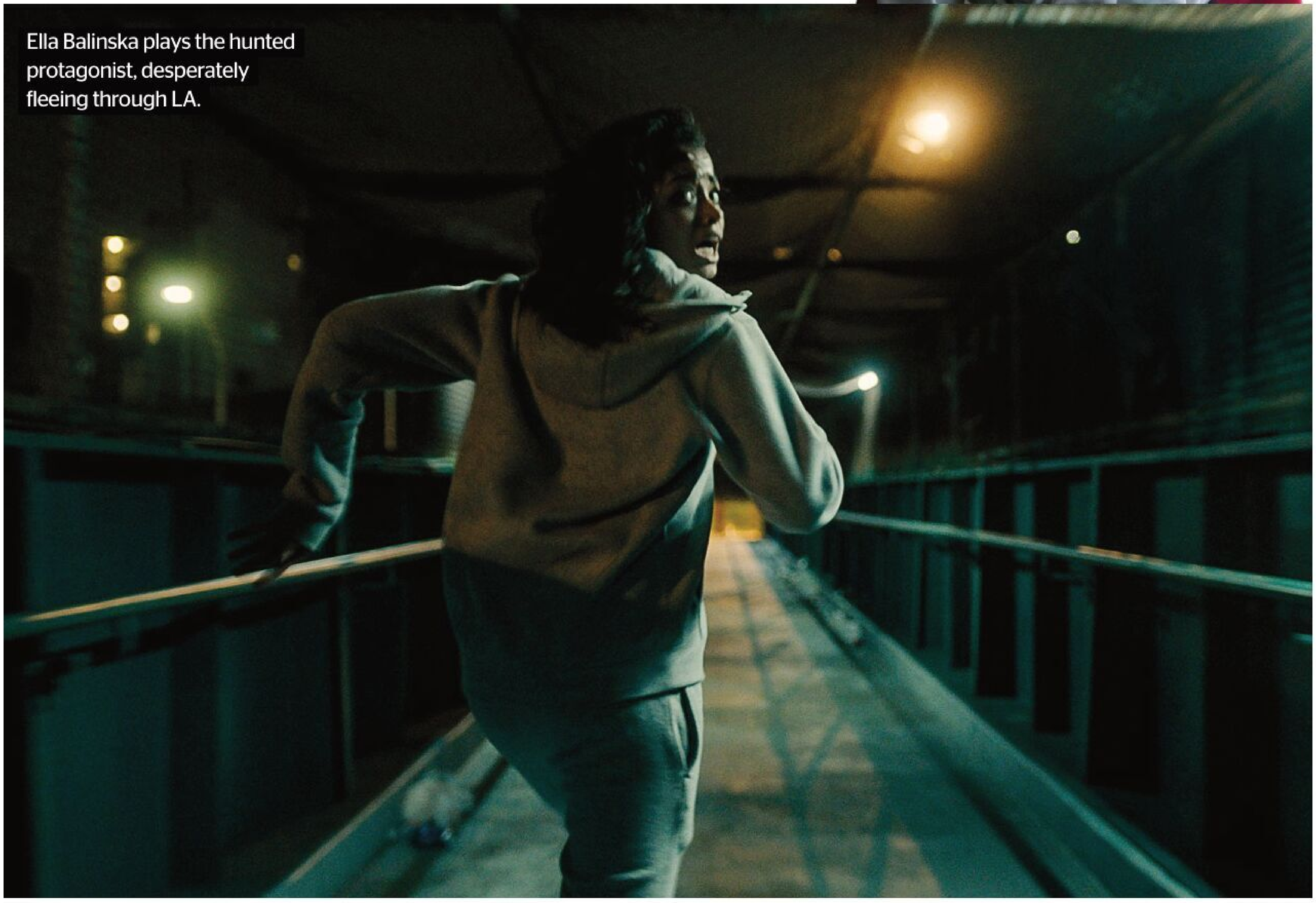
Starring former Charlie's Angel Ella Balinska, *Run Sweetheart Run* is the story of Cherie, a young mother on an impromptu date with a charming client named Ethan (*Game Of Thrones*' Pilou Asbæk) when things suddenly turn violent. Forced to flee on foot with nothing but the clothes on her back, Cherie is pursued across the city by Ethan, quickly learning he's a greater threat than she could have imagined.

The genesis of the story, in Feste's words, "was not a pleasant one". It is based on her own traumatic experience fleeing across Los Angeles after a date gone horribly wrong. Best known for grounded dramas like *The Greatest* and *Boundaries*, Feste chose to tell this particularly personal tale in a social horror space because it afforded the opportunity to rewrite her own story. "I wanted revenge," she says. "And that's something I got to do with this film."

After premiering at Sundance in January 2020, the film underwent crucial reshoots last year under the guidance of producer Effie T. Brown, who worked to make the film "more culturally authentic". Produced on a Blumhouse budget, but with style to spare, it's a film that makes the most of the crepuscular LA setting, and in Asbæk's Ethan features a truly heinous villain.

Though Ethan's precise nature goes tantalisingly unexplained, what's clear is the patriarchal violence Ethan represents, and what Feste wanted to say about it. "I was at a point in my career where I happened to be incredibly angry," Feste says. "And I got to put a lot of that anger into this film." **JORDAN FARLEY**

RUN SWEETHEART RUN STREAMS ON PRIME VIDEO FROM 28 OCTOBER.



Ella Balinska plays the hunted protagonist, desperately fleeing through LA.

AMAZON, GETTY

Q&A

Ella Balinska

The film has a basis in Shana Feste's own experiences. How did you feel about portraying that on screen?

I think because of the way it's written, it's not something that glorifies that trauma. We wanted to really try to pull from as much truth as possible. I was really up for the challenge of telling that story.

Cherie isn't just a victim – why was that important?

She's always fighting. She keeps going. There were a lot of conversations about the character's transformation throughout the film, because she does go from zero to hero. So we wanted to really make sure that, whether it's from her worldview right through to her physicality and the way she approaches any situation, she's stepping into her power as the film moves on.

Pilou has to be awful to you. Was he especially nice when the cameras stopped rolling?

He's nice, anyway! He's a hilarious, hilarious human being. As an actor, he's absolutely wonderful to work with. However, when he's in character, he's absolutely terrifying. Especially the scene in the jail cell, a lot of that fear was actually from me, because he's just so spontaneous. I didn't really know what he was going to do next. **JORDAN FARLEY**

Brendan Gleeson and Colin Farrell reunite – though not in Belgium this time.

Colin Farrell stars as Pádraic, whose friend issues a dark threat.

The film was shot on islands off the west coast of Ireland.

SEARCHLIGHT PICTURES

EXCLUSIVE

ISLAND STRIFE

THE BANSHEES OF INISHERIN

Martin McDonagh returns with a fraught *In Bruges* reunion…

In 2017 writer-director Martin McDonagh had the biggest hit of his career with *Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri*, a film which grossed $160m on a $15m budget, made a splash at the Oscars and resonated at the dawn of the #MeToo era. "This film isn't that," a frank and cheerful McDonagh tells *Teasers*. "It's an interesting slow-burner. I didn't want it to be showy or cool. Mostly, I didn't want to disappoint *In Bruges* fans with a follow-up."

The Banshees Of Inisherin isn't *In Bruges* 2 either, but it does reunite that film's odd couple – Colin Farrell and Brendan Gleeson – as pals Pádraic and Colm respectively. One day Colm abruptly informs Pádraic that he no longer wants to be friends, and that every day Pádraic utters a single word to him he'll sever one of his own digits with a pair of shears – an ultimatum that leads the pair down a dangerous path.

Describing the essential element of the story as "a simple break-up that's not understandable on behalf of one of the people", McDonagh may centre *Banshees* on a male friendship, but the feelings of rejection, resentment, confusion and guilt he taps into are universal. "I've tried to be truthful to both parties in a break-up, which most of us have been at one stage or another. And to see how dark or funny or sad you could take that."

Though it shares a similar title to the unmade third play in McDonagh's Aran Islands trilogy, *Banshees* is a completely original story conceived for the cinema. Filmed on Inishmore and Achill Island off the west coast of Ireland, McDonagh calls the film "possibly the most beautiful" of the four features he's made, while the decision to set the story in 1923, as the Irish Civil War rages on the mainland, allowed for an intimate story to mirror larger concerns.

"There is a bigger framework for this microscopic version," McDonagh explains. "I didn't want to be too heavy-handed, but to do something seemingly small that has bigger, deeper ramifications."

Also starring Barry Keoghan as (what else but) an agitator who comes between Colm and Pádraic, and McDonagh regular Kerry Condon as Pádraic's scene-stealing sister Siobhán, the film's largely Irish cast speak in authentic dialect. Did McDonagh encounter any pushback from studio shot-callers?

"I had complete freedom, really. And I wouldn't listen to a note like that anyway," he smiles. "I always think: if you're a lazy idiot, yeah, you're not going to get it, because they're not talking about Thor and Spider-Man. So fuck off! It's not your kind of film anyway!" **JORDAN FARLEY**

Farrell and co-star Barry Keoghan, in a tale set against the backdrop of the Irish Civil War.

THE BANSHEES OF INISHERIN OPENS IN CINEMAS ON 21 OCTOBER.

The film explores the explosive nature of crime.

EXCLUSIVE

SECRETS AND LIES

THE STRANGER A web of deceit ensnares a murder suspect in this fact-based thriller.

"We live in a landscape that's defined by a hidden violence," says Thomas M. Wright when asked why he, like so many of his fellow Australian filmmakers, has been compelled to tell stories about crime and lawlessness. "It's a colonised country and I think there's something that insists that darkness on us."

Wright's debut feature, 2018's *Acute Misfortune*, was not about crime per se but certainly dealt with lawlessness in its depiction of an artist's abusive relationship with his biographer. *The Stranger*, in contrast, investigates a specific violation: the 2003 murder of a Queensland schoolboy that led to an eight-year hunt for his abductor and killer.

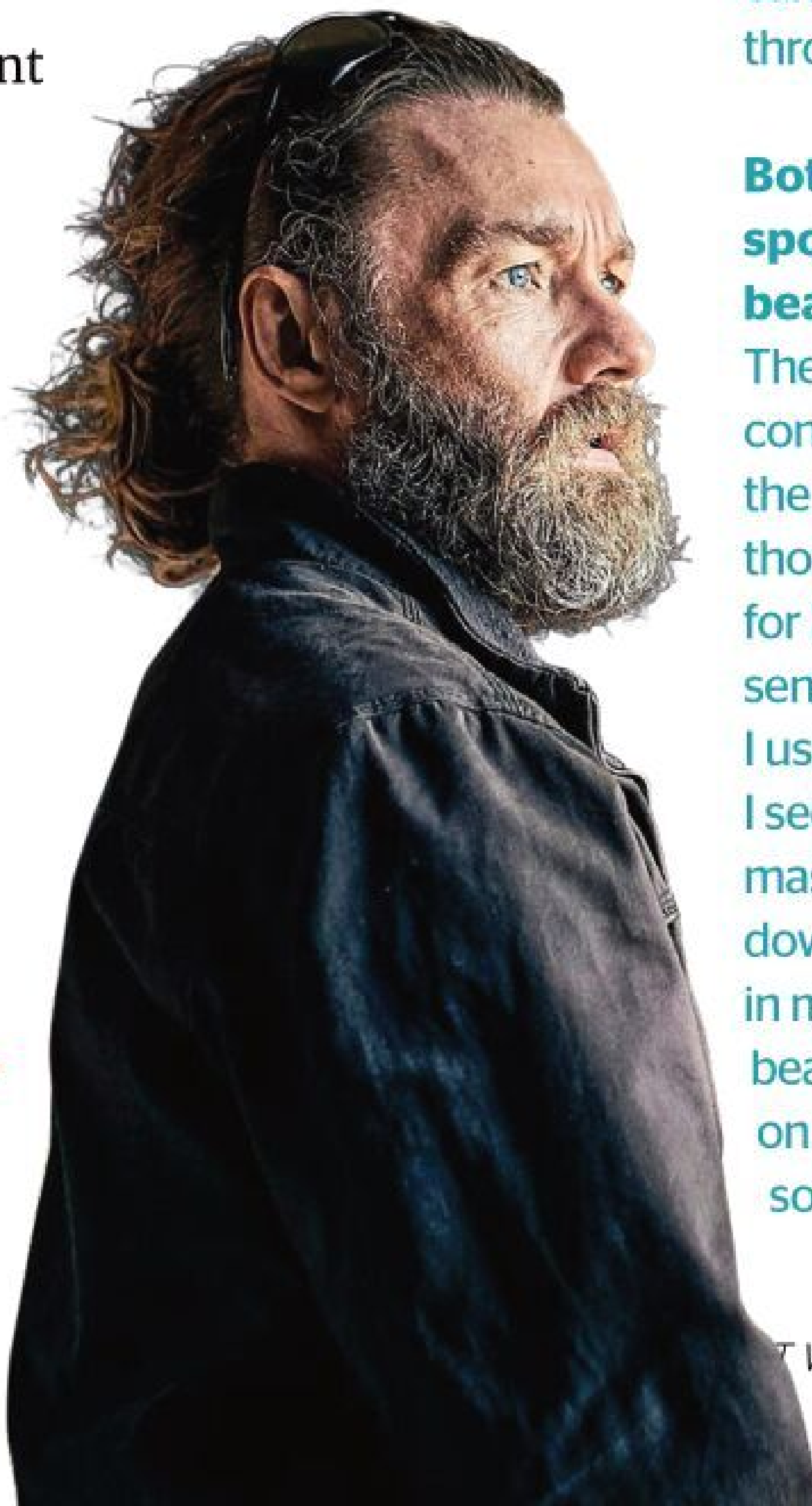
The details of the case are known well Down Under, due in part to the elaborate "Mr. Big" operation that lured the perpetrator into the authorities' clutches. However, Wright knew a direct dramatisation was out of the question.

"I had no right to represent that child, and I had a total unwillingness to represent the person responsible," he explains. "But what I could do is personalise it, because when these kinds of events happen, they affect us all."

Focusing instead on the odd affinity that develops between suspected murderer Henry Teague (Sean Harris) and Mark, the undercover cop who befriends him (Joel Edgerton), Wright's film explores "those connective fibres of empathy between people". "Because really they're the things that hold society together," the director adds. "Morally and ethically, we've made a film we can all stand behind."

For British star Harris, the 14 days he spent in quarantine prior to the film's Covid-cautious shoot played a key role in his character's evolution. "I had these two weeks in a hotel room, in solitary confinement in a sense, when Henry started to possess me," reveals the *Mission: Impossible* series actor. "I had doctors and nurses ringing me every day, asking how I was doing, so I answered as Henry." "I think Sean scared himself, and I scared myself as well," says his director. "Making this film definitely put a scratch on our records." **NEIL SMITH**

THE STRANGER STREAMS ON NETFLIX IN OCTOBER.



Joel Edgerton

What attracted you to this story?

My interest initially was very intellectual. It was the opposite of a normal sting operation, in that instead of it being one cop pretending to be a criminal, it was one criminal being invited into a fake criminal network. It felt to me like *The Truman Show*, but like a drama. But then through working with Thomas it became a more human and emotional story, that dealt with the psychology of what it means for an undercover cop to do the work they do.

Did you get a chance to meet the detective your character is based on?

Thomas and I have done research so I know information about the case. But I'll never meet 'Mark' and I'll never know his real name. He's an enigma to me that I can only learn about through other people.

Both you and Sean sport formidable beards in the film...

There were so many conversations about the beards, but I thought it was suitable for Mark to have a sense of playing a role. I usually have a beard; I see it as a mark of a masculinity that deep down I don't think exists in me. But having a beard puts an armour on me; it's a disguise of sorts. **NEIL SMITH**

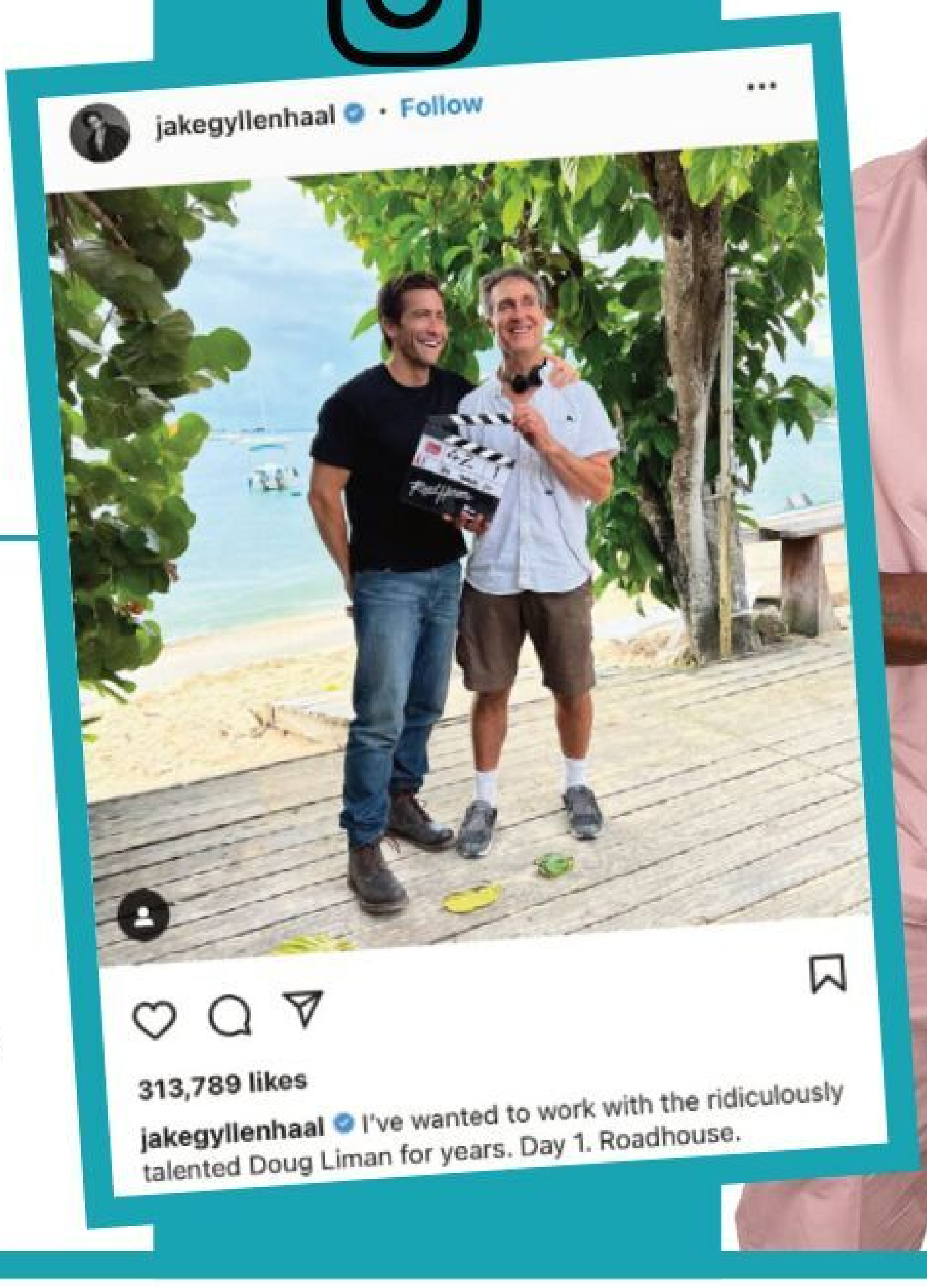
NETFLIX, GETTY

SOUND BYTES

The month in dialogue and digits.

“I WAS SAYING IT NEEDS TO BE 10 SEASONS AT LEAST AND MAYBE 12, 13. I LOST THAT ONE.”

IF IT WERE UP TO GEORGE RR MARTIN **WE’D STILL BE WATCHING GAME OF THRONES.**



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jakegyllenhaal I've wanted to work with the ridiculously talented Doug Liman for years. Day 1. Roadhouse.

“My daughter, she was great, but... the chemistry wasn’t right for film, weirdly enough. [*She*] didn’t talk to me for about three weeks.”

IDRIS ELBA GOT IN HOT WATER FOR REFUSING TO CAST HIS OWN DAUGHTER AS HIS CHARACTER’S DAUGHTER IN BEAST.

30s

THE AGE BRACKET THE NEXT JAMES BOND ACTOR WILL BE IN, ACCORDING TO PRODUCERS **BARBARA BROCCOLI** AND **MICHAEL G. WILSON.**

400

THE NUMBER OF PUSH-UPS THE MCU’S HERCULES BRETT GOLDSTEIN **DID ON THE DAY OF HIS LOVE AND THUNDER CAMEO, AFTER A MERE TWO WEEKS OF PREP TIME.**

“HE SAID, ‘WHO WOULD BELIEVE THAT UMA THURMAN COULD KICK YOUR ASS?’”

MICHELLE YEOH **SAYS TARANTINO HAD A GOOD REASON FOR NOT CASTING HER IN KILL BILL.**

SAFE BET

Martin Scorsese and Leonardo DiCaprio will team up for the seventh time on *The Wager*, David Grann’s upcoming, non-fiction naval thriller.

GOOD THING

BAD THING

NICHELLE NICHOLS RIP

Trailblazing screen star Nichelle Nichols, best known as *Star Trek’s* translation and communications officer Uhura, has died at the age of 89.

“I PLAY A SASQUATCH: FULL MAKEUP, FULL BODY HAIR, NO LINES. I GRUNT, BUT NO LINES.”

JESSE EISENBERG IS GOING BIG (FOOT) FOR HIS NEXT ROLE.

“I STILL BEG HIM TO RELEASE THE FIVE-HOUR CUT OF THAT FILM.”

ETHAN HAWKE **WANTS EVERYONE TO SEE ANTOINE FUQUA’S JUMBO-SIZED MAGNIFICENT SEVEN DIRECTOR’S CUT.**

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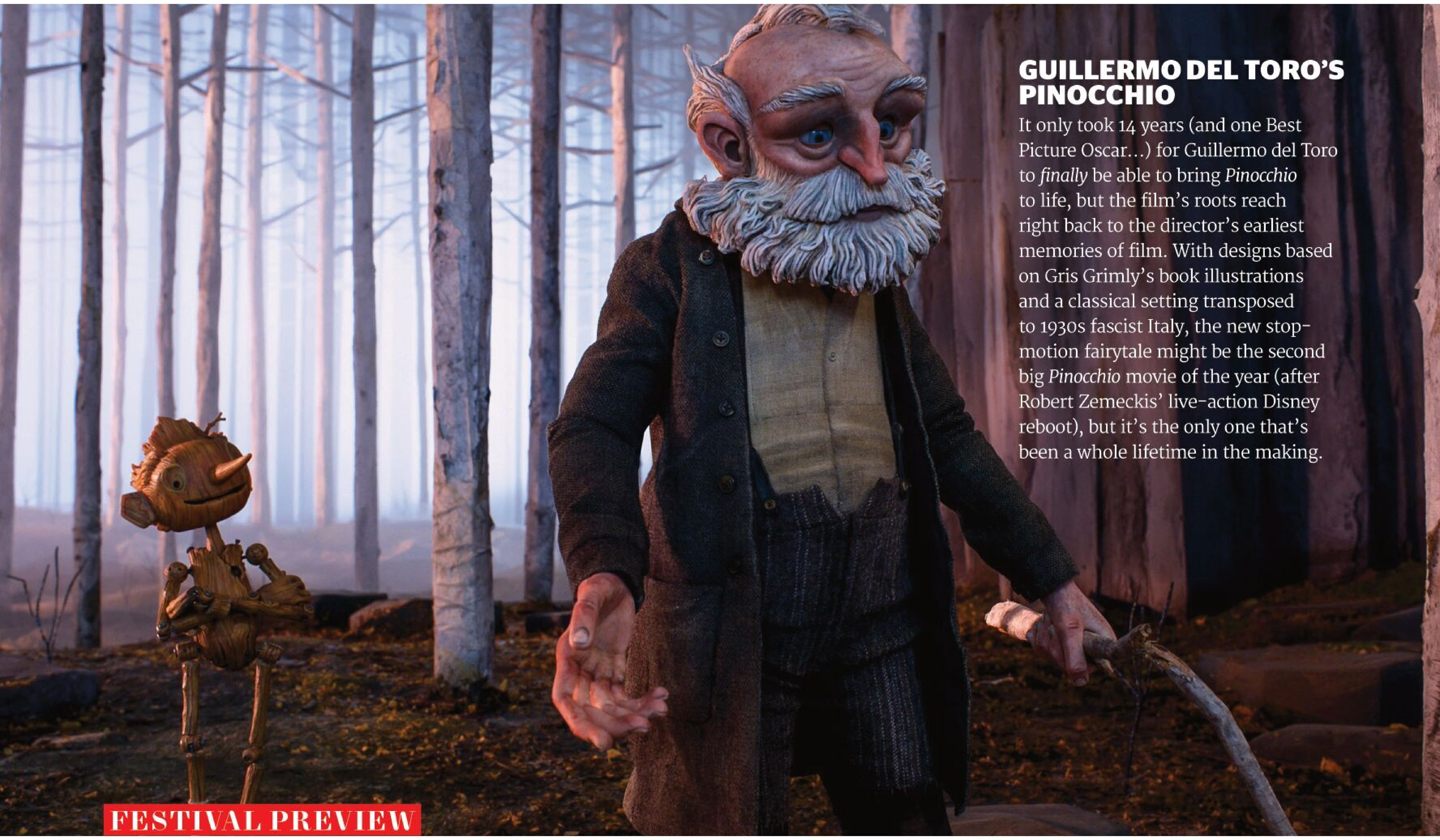


GUILLERMO DEL TORO'S PINOCCHIO

It only took 14 years (and one Best Picture Oscar…) for Guillermo del Toro to *finally* be able to bring *Pinocchio* to life, but the film's roots reach right back to the director's earliest memories of film. With designs based on Gris Grimly's book illustrations and a classical setting transposed to 1930s fascist Italy, the new stop-motion fairytale might be the second big *Pinocchio* movie of the year (after Robert Zemeckis' live-action Disney reboot), but it's the only one that's been a whole lifetime in the making.

FESTIVAL PREVIEW

CAPITAL SHOW

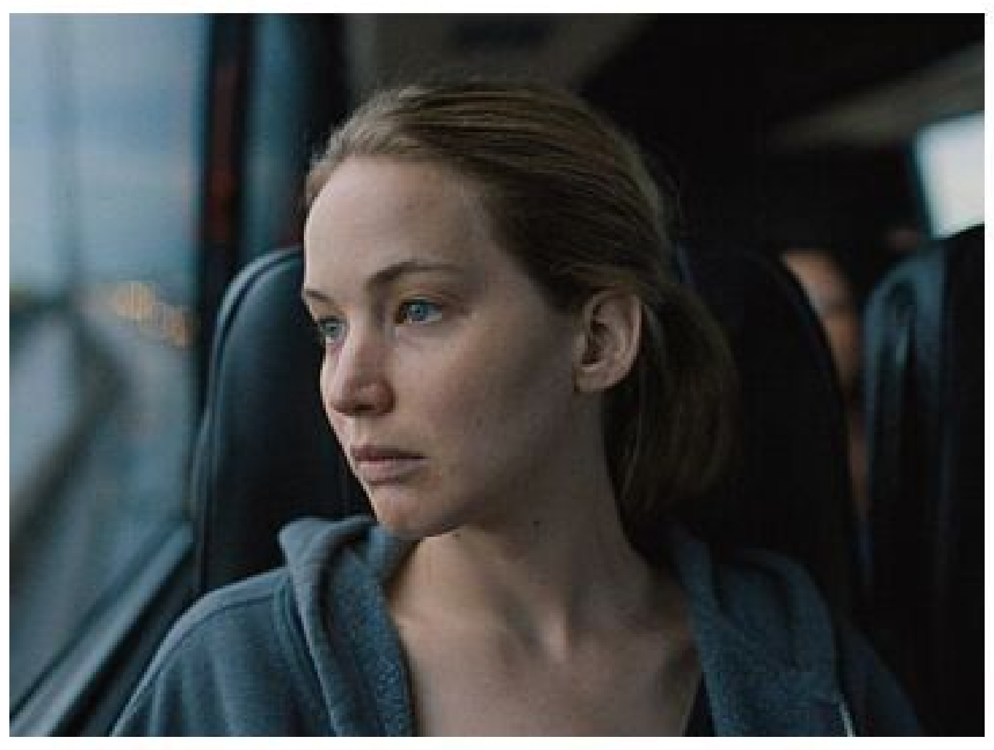
LONDON FILM FESTIVAL Five films to look out for at this year's LFF

KLOKKENLUIDER

What if Edward Snowden had no idea what he was doing? Described by director Neil Maskell as "a character-based chamber piece disguised as a political thriller", closeted dark comedy *Klokkenluider* (starring Tom Burke and Jenna Coleman) sees a government whistleblower sent into hiding in the Belgian countryside with his wife to await the fallout of his awkwardly spilled secrets. Writing and directing his first film after decades spent acting under the likes of Gary Oldman, Ben Wheatley and Steve McQueen, expect Maskell to bring a new British voice to the LFF.

CREATURE

Documentary giant Asif Kapadia partners with the English National Ballet to bring Akram Khan's landmark production to the screen in an ambitious modern dance film that looks to be one of the festival's most intriguing entries. Drawing elements from Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Georg Büchner's *Woyzeck* (as well as nodding to everything from Trump, Putin, the moon landing and Jeff Bezos), *Creature*'s dystopian love story spans genres with nothing but movement and music – giving us the marriage of edgy sci-fi ballet and silent film we didn't know we needed.



CAUSEWAY

Jennifer Lawrence returns with one of the most challenging roles of her career – playing a returned American soldier struggling with the rigours of civilian life after suffering a traumatic brain injury on the battlefields of Afghanistan. Acclaimed theatre director Lila Neugebauer makes her feature-film debut with the heavyweight PTSD drama from A24, with Brian Tyree Henry joining Lawrence in a film that promises to be one of the most uncomfortable watches of this year's festival – as well as one of the strongest contenders in next year's award season.

EMPIRE OF LIGHT

What better choice for the LFF's Gala presentation this year than Sam Mendes' ode to cinema itself? Set in an English seaside picture palace in the early '80s, *Empire Of Light* promises to be the new *Cinema Paradiso* – projecting the loves and losses of smalltown life on the one screen that sees it all. Olivia Colman, Micheal Ward and Colin Firth are the film's owners, ushers and tragic lovers, but the real stars will be the local cinemas up and down the country that will hopefully find themselves swooning in their own spotlight.

PAUL BRADSHAW

THE LONDON FILM FESTIVAL **TAKES PLACE FROM 5-16 OCTOBER.**

THE LONDON FILM FESTIVAL, 20TH CENTURY STUDIOS, NETFLIX

Mbundu Joely and Pablo Schils star in the film, which won an award at Cannes.

EXCLUSIVE

FARM HANDS

TORI AND LOKITA The Dardenne brothers' latest hard-hitting drama is dope...

"For us it was very important to make a film on friendship – between two young, exiled, underage kids," says Luc Dardenne. "We didn't want to portray them as victims." He's talking about *Tori And Lokita*, his latest film made with brother Jean-Pierre that returns to the topic of immigration and exploitation previously tackled in their 1996 film *La Promesse*. This time, the subject is vulnerable youngsters.

Tori (Pablo Schils) and Lokita (Mbundu Joely) are friends from Benin desperate to get their residence papers in Belgium. But owing money to people-traffickers, they are soon sucked into crime. While Tori sells marijuana on the streets, Lokita agrees to oversee a cannabis farm – a terrifying, solo existence. As ever with the Dardennes, the devil is in the detail, all supplied by a narcotics cop. "He explained to us how it's built, this kind of plantation," says Jean-Pierre. "The lighting, the heat, even the different steps of growing."

Other inspirations ranged from Akira Kurosawa's 1975 film *Dersu Uzala*, a Siberian-set drama about friendship under duress, to a French journal that zeroes in on the living conditions in Europe for young immigrants. "In that journal," adds Luc, "there is a great deal of explanation of the diseases these kids develop, due to the loneliness and the conditions in which they're forced to live in." This fed into the character of Lokita, who suffers from panic attacks.

'We didn't want to portray them as victims'
LUC DARDENNE

When *Tori And Lokita* played in Cannes earlier this year, the Belgian siblings picked up a special one-off prize – the 75th Award – for the festival's birthday. It'll certainly help the film – and its "invisible" characters – get seen, says Jean-Pierre. "We want the viewers to look at them – and especially look at our world – through their eyes. And look at them as men and women. And not like some social cases." **JAMES MOTTRAM**

TORI AND LOKITA OPENS IN CINEMAS ON 28 OCTOBER.

SHORT CUTS The latest happenings in movieland...

JOY RIDE

Jon Hurwitz, Hayden Schlossberg and Josh Heald are giving *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* the *Cobra Kai* treatment with spin-off film *Sam And Victor's Day Off*, which will follow the previously unnamed valets as they take the borrowed Ferrari for a spin.

AND A MOVIE!

With the requisite six seasons in the can since 2015, the prophesied *Community* movie has taken one step towards reality with creator Dan Harmon confirming that an outline exists and is being pitched around studios, though it could still take years to make.

DREAM WARRIOR

Birds Of Prey director Cathy Yan will direct a live-action series adaptation of Yasutaka Tsutsui's novel *Paprika* for Amazon. The novel was previously adapted as a hit 2006 anime, which followed a research psychologist who enters the dream world to hunt a terrorist.

FOR A SPIN

Following the relative success of *Uncharted*, PlayStation Studios are doubling down on feature adaptations of their games with Anna Mastro set to direct head-spinning sci-fi *Gravity Rush*, and Sam Heughan set to star in biker horror *Days Gone*.

PICTUREHOUSE ENTERTAINMENT, ALAMY, GETTY

NEXT BIG THING

PHOTOGRAPHER: JOSEPH SINCLAIR. SKIN & HAIR: NADIA ALTINBAS

DAVID DAWSON
IS A LAW UNTO HIMSELF...

"It's not a bad gig to get to fall in love with Harry Styles, be best friends with Emma Corrin, and grow up to be Rupert Everett," smiles David Dawson of his role in era-spanning love triangle *My Policeman*. As the Brit stage and screen actor tells *Teasers*, stepping into another time is "one of the major treats of this job".

What drew you to museum curator Patrick in *My Policeman*?
On certain scripts, you seem to weirdly know who this person is. As a gay man myself, this story immediately felt fascinating, because… I'd never seen a drama concerned about the '50s. As someone who's fascinated by history and the way we were, it really intrigued me, asking the question, "What would I have done in this situation and this time?"

Did you talk to Rupert Everett, who plays the older Patrick?
That was very special. I had a big phone call with him. It started off about the script and the character, but beyond that, I just got to pick his brain. I saw him in *The Judas Kiss* in the West End - that's a performance that has forever stayed with me. He promised he'd direct me in *Richard II* one day, and I'm going to hold him to it.

You and Harry worked with an intimacy coordinator on the sex scenes…
Michael [*Grandage, director*], very early on, told us just how much support we would get – all three of us, really – and brought in this wonderful intimacy coordinator. Also, Harry and I made the decision to check in with each other throughout the whole process to make sure we both felt completely supported. That kind of trust between us and Michael creates something special, I hope.

What's on your acting bucket list?
I'd love to do something really dark, like some kind of creature. *A Clockwork Orange* is one of my all-time favourite movies – that and *Rocky Horror* [*laughs*]. So some kind of hybrid of Frank-N-Furter and Malcolm McDowell would be really cool. **MATT MAYTUM**

MY POLICEMAN OPENS IN CINEMAS ON 21 OCTOBER, AND STREAMS ON PRIME VIDEO FROM 4 NOVEMBER.

Leslie Grace in the now-axed *Batgirl*

CAN WE TALK ABOUT?

MOVIES AS CONTENT

WHY *BATGIRL* ISN'T THE ONLY CASUALTY OF THE IP ERA.

JOEL HARLEY
@JOELHARLEY

In early August, fans were rocked by the cancellation of DC and Warner Bros' *Batgirl*. As shock waves echoed, CEO David Zaslav issued statements in PR babble, the boardroom jargon reflecting the thought process behind their decision. "We can't find an economic case for it," Zaslav said, "so we're making a strategic shift." And the tax break gained by canning the film can't have hurt.

This treatment of *Batgirl* speaks to a sad precedent, a landscape of Intellectual Property, Content and Franchising. An environment in which movies that aren't a Marvel, DC or ready-packaged IP find it increasingly difficult to get into the multiplexes. A world in which *Free Guy* and *Ambulance* are the underdogs, the outliers. As studios attempt to compete with streaming, the Product is manufactured for maximum profitability, homogenised and sanitised for maximum appeal.

WHAT'S THE FUN IN THREE SPIDER-MEN IF THEIR WORLD LOOKS MISERABLE?

Of course, Marvel's release model remains the envy of its competitors, with one neatly packaged product following the next off an oiled production line. This isn't to say that Disney and the Marvel Cinematic Universe are without merit – not with the likes of Coogler and Waititi involved. However, the fast-food-kitchen approach is responsible for the poor CGI and studio-mandated story beats which populate recent releases, even as overworked VFX artists struggle to hit deadlines. What's the fun in three Spider-Men if their world looks so miserable?

Meanwhile, those who might take respite in the pleasures of classic cinema are finding it increasingly difficult as shareholders make access to their back catalogues more inaccessible, refusing theatres permission to screen older films, driving profit through scarcity. The multiplexes are crowded out with the same franchise pictures for months on end, as the corporations attempt to block out their competitors.

Sure, *Batgirl* may well have been terrible, but its treatment remains a slap in the face to the creatives involved, their work discarded like a defective sweatshop cardigan. When not even a high-profile Batman spin-off is seen as profitable enough for release, what hope do the independents have? This is the world that franchises have wrought. Is it worth it?

ALAMY

Constance Wu, Javier Bardem and Winslow Fegley make up the human contingent of the theatrical team.

EDIT-BAY VISIT

SNAP HAPPY

LYLE, LYLE, CROCODILE Javier Bardem and singer Shawn Mendes enjoy a little croc 'n' roll.

A crooning saltwater crocodile called Lyle is the all-singing, all-dancing CGI star of musical movie, *Lyle, Lyle, Crocodile*. The project features the vocal talents of Canadian pop star Shawn Mendes in the toothy lead role of this hybrid live-action adaptation of the beloved children's story by Bernard Waber.

Directed by Will Speck and Josh Gordon, the family-friendly film features Constance Wu, Brett Gelman, and Javier Bardem as Lyle's flamboyant owner Hector P. Valenti, a theatrical role that required four and a half months of training. "It took six Zooms and a lot of talking to get Javier on board," recalls Speck. "He was a little hesitant to jump in because he wanted to make sure the movie wasn't goofy. I think we slowly broke him down. He realised that the musical had its heart in the right place."

From the three show-stopping scenes that *Teasers* sees in a dark edit bay on the Sony Pictures lot in California, it's clear that Bardem relishes the role. The toe-tapping tale features eight original songs from Benj Pasek and Justin Paul, the songwriting team behind *The Greatest Showman*, so expect the tunes to be stuck in your head for months. "Pasek and Paul write populist music that's very sophisticated," explains Speck. "It has its feet in both musical theatre and in pop, so there's a fantastic Shawn Mendes ballad, as well as a very musical number for the opening scene. We really run the gamut of musical styles."

The singing voice of Lyle is provided by pop star Shawn Mendes.

'It's nice putting something soulful and positive into the world'
JOSH GORDON

Lyle, Lyle, Crocodile is joining the ranks of *Paddington* and *Sonic The Hedgehog* as the latest live-action family movie to feature a fully CG, anthropomorphic lead character, but Speck notes a clear distinction that makes their project stand apart. "They are both fantastic, effective movies – but we're different because our CG character doesn't speak. Lyle expresses himself only through music. It would've been a lot easier to have somebody voice him who's very comedic and give him full range of vocal performance, but we were excited by the challenge. We also wanted to honour what the book suggests and not have Lyle talk."

With *Blaze Of Glory*, *Office Christmas Party* and Marvel's adult animated series *Hit-Monkey* under their belt, you might not expect Speck and Gordon to be targeting a younger demographic. "It's been a long time coming," admits Gordon. "We've been trying to give ourselves different challenges as filmmakers. Even though we've done adult comedies, there's always been an element of connectivity, heart or humanity in everything we do. We're cynical guys, but it's nice putting something soulful and positive into the world." **ADAM TANSWELL**

LYLE, LYLE, CROCODILE OPENS IN CINEMAS ON 14 OCTOBER.

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Jonas (Eddie Marsan) throws Vesper (Raffiella Chapman) out on her ear.

EXCLUSIVE

BIO SHOCK

VESPER A 13-year-old prodigy struggles to change the world in a hopeful fantasy parable.

Jus' wandrin' the swamps with her sick dad's voice in a dusty floating bot, obv.

How would directorial team Kristina Buozyte and Bruno Samper describe the future dystopia of *Vesper*? "We have a term," Buozyte explains to *Teasers*. "It's a bio-fantasy." Co-director Samper clarifies: "It's a paradox: a dead world, but very alive." Does that make sense?

Trying to survive this "future middle age" (another of Buozyte and Samper's paradoxes) is 13-year-old scientist Vesper (Raffiella Chapman). Struggling to adapt to life under Earth's collapsed ecosystem, Vesper must also care for her paralysed father, accompanied by a drone programmed with his voice. When Vesper meets a mysterious woman with a world-changing secret, she begins to realise that perhaps she can save the planet from within, using her own 'bio hacking' abilities.

To Buozyte and Samper, finding their Vesper was essential. Without the right actor, the film could have fallen apart before it got started. "It was a gamble," says Buozyte. Thankfully, Chapman fit the bill. "She gave us 150 per cent, diving into the role. She became Vesper. She sees beauty. It's not enough for her just to survive, she wants to create well-being and beauty around her." No easy task in a dead world of murky swamplands and foreboding alien woods.

Exciting new talent Chapman stars alongside veteran character actors Eddie Marsan, Rosy McEwen and Richard Brake – the latter playing against type as Vesper's sick father, suffering from locked-in syndrome. Was the choice to subvert Brake's normally villainous image (*3 From Hell*, *31*) a conscious one? "You want to play with the best instruments," enthuses Samper. "Richard was perfect for that. He is a very soft person, very sweet, calm and passionate. He was lying in this bed for hours, with all this machinery. The level of concentration was amazing."

With their cast locked, now the directors could start building – or knocking down – their world. "We are not big budget like Marvel, we only have one concept artist," Samper says. "But a very talented one!" Buozyte interjects. In *Vesper*, the old sits alongside the new and the retro, Earth's collapsed ecosystem having given way to new strains of plant life, growing from the decomposing husk of the old world. Even so, capitalism retains its iron grip on the people, refusing to let go. "It speaks about today," says Samper.

However, it was important to Buozyte and Samper that even their dystopia not be hopeless. To the film's directors, Vesper is hope personified. "*Vesper* is a movie about hope," says Samper. "She represents all human values. If there are still these [*human*] values in the world, then everything can start again." It sounds as though Vesper is the kind of hero we could all use right now. **JOEL HARLEY**

'It's not enough for her just to survive, she wants to create well-being and beauty around her'
KRISTINA BUOZYTE

VESPER IS IN CINEMAS AND ON DIGITAL FROM 21 OCTOBER.

SIGNATURE ENTERTAINMENT

Dancer Otis (Quentin Plair) puts on a show.

FIRST WORD

NAKED AMBITION

WELCOME TO CHIPPENDALES

The infamous dance troupe bares all for a revealing new drama

Ask someone what the first thing that comes to mind when someone says 'Chippendales dancers' is, and usually it's images of scantily clad men wearing white cuffs and bow ties, stripping for thirsty audiences filled with women. What almost never comes up is that the internationally famous, all-male stripping troupe was the brainchild of Indian-born US entrepreneur Somen "Steve" Banerjee and Paul Snider, a nightclub promoter and the eventual murderer of *Playboy* model Dorothy Stratten.

Despite the Chippendales still performing to this day in their own theatre in Las Vegas and touring cities annually around the globe, their origin story remains a relative mystery to the masses. But the upcoming drama series *Welcome To Chippendales* aims to tell the unbelievable story of the violent events that birthed the brand and how it helped shape the cultural, sexual and capitalist landscape in the '80s and beyond.

In the series, Kumail Nanjiani plays Banerjee alongside Dan Stevens as Snider and Murray Bartlett as famed Chippendales choreographer Nick De Noia. To set the scale and scope of the Chippendales' origin story, series creator/executive producer Robert Siegel says *Welcome To Chippendales* will take audiences to the beginning of Banerjee's modest start as a Los Angeles gas-station manager and follow it through to the shocking murder that severed his connection with the organisation.

Juliette Lewis stars as Denise (centre), who enjoys a night at the club.

Admittedly unaware of the specifics of the story until he came across it in development, Siegel says the series portrays the unexpected personalities who came together to conceive of the Chippendales as a brand-new entertainment venture.

"The fact that the guy behind Chippendales was an Indian immigrant is fascinating and surprising, and then you add the connection to *Playboy* and Dorothy Stratten and the whole Paul Snider angle of it," he says of the infamous creators behind the troupe.

Growing up in Australia, Murray Bartlett says he had an awareness and a preconceived notion of what a Chippendales show entailed, but never saw one until getting cast for this series.

"I saw it as this campy, fun, male-strip-show kind of thing," he says. "But I didn't have any idea that there was this complex, interesting story behind it. You step into this world that has depth and surprises. All these amazing, very rich characters who each have very fascinating stories in themselves, and then when they collide with each other, it's explosive. It's just packed with surprises that really don't stop coming until the very end."

Taking a page from Hugh Hefner's *Playboy* club model, the Chippendales was the first nightclub aimed towards a primarily female clientele as a venue to safely watch produced male strip shows.

ERIN SIMKIN/HULU, GETTY

Movers and shakers: Founder Steve and (below) choreographer Nick.

"The sexuality is definitely a big part of the show, but it's really only one part," Siegel says. "What I just love is it's a show about male stripping, but it also really goes pretty deep into the American dream, assimilation, second-wave feminism, and not to get too brainy, but racism and what it means to be a non-white person in America. There's a lot of interesting intersections with all these themes."

Annaleigh Ashford, who plays the club's accountant and Banerjee's future wife, Irene, says the series reveals how the Chippendales story is synonymous with the women's movement.

"I think one of the things that was most interesting about the club is that it challenged our heteronormative views of the way that women are supposed to behave in a sexual way," she explains. "That has always been a thread of the show that we found was important to highlight. It was a club and a world dominated by men, created by men, but really the people who made it happen were women because they showed up every day and they were provided with the space to be free and unabashedly themselves."

But as with many well-intentioned enterprises, the Chippendales was eventually compromised by greed. Siegel says the beginning of Banerjee's end with the club came from infighting between him and De Noia.

"The feminism starts to get affected by the capitalism because Steve sees these opportunities," Siegel teases. "The club starts as this place where the tables are turned and women are treating the men as sex objects. But then one thing Steve discovers is that if he lets men into the club after hours, he'll make a ton of money. So that whole thing about women being in charge gets, in a way, thrown out the window when he realises he can make a buck letting men in, so it's sort of no longer this safe space."

Siegel says he hopes audiences are equally shocked and fascinated by what *Welcome To Chippendales* ultimately reveals about the real people behind the now infamous brand. "There's a lot of crazy stuff that goes on including murder and the discovery of break-away pants," he laughs. "It's exciting."

TARA BENNETT

WELCOME TO CHIPPENDALES IS AWAITING A UK RELEASE DATE.

Q&A

Kumail Nanjiani

Steve Banerjee's story is fascinating but still relatively unknown. What was most intriguing about him?

I think what makes the story interesting is that it really is the story of what it means to be successful in America and the kind of things that you have to do to be successful in America, particularly as someone who's not American. How does America treat someone who doesn't look like how a lot of the country thinks Americans should look and what does it take to succeed in that kind of world?

Is his story just reflective of its time in the '80s or is it more universal?

It's really situated in a very specific time and place in America, but I think it's really applicable today. The idea of American success is a very specific thing and non-American peoples' interpretation of it is also a very specific thing, so it's a show that really explores all that stuff. The men dancing for women is a bonus.

Should Banerjee be seen as a feminist?

Steve created this space where women could really express themselves in a way that they had not been able to in a big group. However, that was not why he created that space, right? He was trying to just make money. He hit on a great idea at just the right time. And then he used the feminism angle when he needed to, to become more successful. To me, what was always interesting about him is that he did ultimately a really exciting thing that was just for the service of, in some ways, himself.

TARA BENNETT

IT SHOULDN'T HAPPEN TO A FILM JOURNALIST

Editor-at-Large **JAMIE GRAHAM** lifts the lid on film journalism.

THIS MONTH...
SELECTING MY TOP 10 FILMS

The initial feeling was one of delight. 'Since 1952 *Sight And Sound* has conducted a once-a-decade poll of the world's most respected critics, programmers, academics and curators, asking them each for their top 10 films of all time,' read the email. 'The collated results are then published in the most globally recognised poll of its kind – *Sight And Sound*'s Greatest Films Of All Time. We would welcome your participation in the 2022 poll...'

Very quickly the delight of being invited to participate turned to panicked horror. How the hell do you squeeze 127 years of cinema into just 10 films?

Now, I'm one of those people who makes film lists pretty much every week – ask me for my top 10 black-and-white films of the 21st century or my top 10 Ingmar Bergman pictures or my top 10 dogs in movies and I'll have it at hand – but *this*? Impossible. I was half-tempted to reply with a meme of a cowering, shell-shocked Daniel Kaluuya: "Nope."

MISSION IMPOSSIBLE

With so many riches to pick from, I quickly decided that no director could have more than one film in the 10. But should I extend my 'share the love' ethos to ensure the selection was spread evenly across decades and continents? Should I make sure that female directors and Black filmmakers were represented, or would a list of 10 films dominated by white men act as a meta-commentary on the lack of opportunity traditionally afforded? Should I ensure a smooth shuffle of genres? Should I, should I, should I...

Or should I put aside any such calculations and simply follow my heart? But therein lies another problem: there's often a big difference between Greatest Films and Favourite Films, and as much as I adore certain movies I've watched on spin-cycle – *Christine*, *The Color Of Money*, *Point Break*, *Bloodsport* – I'd never argue they belong on a Greatest Films Of All Time list. Well, maybe *Bloodsport*.

OK, I decided – I'd plump for films that ticked every box, in that they're both genuinely important (to cinema, to me) and endlessly entertaining. They'd be films that I've returned to again and again because they forever offer something new. And they'd be formally audacious, emotionally bold. Hmm, maybe *Bloodsport* would make the cut after all.

WATCH PARTY

Quickly I realised I had six definites that were all on my list when *S&S* invited me to vote in 2012. The problem was the other four places, with 30-odd films circling like sharks (a fitting metaphor given *Jaws* was one of them). I needed to know which of those most resonated with me right here, right now. There was only one thing for it – I spent a month rewatching the lot.

Only what developed was the filmic equivalent of whack-a-mole, as every time I ticked off a masterpiece, another popped up in its place. 'I'd better revisit such-and-such as well, just to be sure,' I'd think, and 30 rewatches turned into 50 turned into 70 until deadline day landed. 'If only I was famous enough to flout the rules and submit 12 titles, like Tarantino did in 2012,' I thought as I cut the final two titles and pressed 'SUBMIT', an act akin to lopping off two of my limbs. Of course, it really wouldn't have made a blind bit of difference – last year I listed my Top 1,000 movies for my own amusement, and all I succeeded in doing was haunting myself with the films that missed out.

So what *did* I go for? That I can't yet reveal, at the behest of *Sight And Sound*. But if you're interested, individual lists will be online later this year, as will the collated list. Just please don't @ me with films I missed out.

'THE DELIGHT OF BEING INVITED TURNED TO PANICKED HORROR'

Can *Bloodsport* kick its way into Jamie's top 10 list?

JAMIE WILL RETURN NEXT ISSUE... FOR MORE MISADVENTURES, FOLLOW: @JAMIE_GRAHAM9 ON TWITTER.

5 THINGS

DIE SEAS

WRECK Lives are on the liner in a missing-sister mystery…

1 SHIP HAPPENS

Six-part series *Wreck* centres on Jamie (Oscar Kennedy), who boards luxury cruise liner the Sacramentum as a below-decks grunt in search of answers surrounding the disappearance of his beloved sister, who was on the ship's last voyage. Unconvinced by the official line that she jumped overboard, he bonds with fellow outsider Vivian (Thaddea Graham) and discovers a world of tribalism, excess (led by Jack Rowan's insecure stud, Danny) and a killer mascot called Quacky. "I hadn't ever seen a teen slasher series in the UK," says creator Ryan J. Brown. "Then I read an article about the cruise industry and it seemed to provide the perfect setting."

2 SEE CHANGE

"This really is the gayest show ever and I love it!" Brown enthuses. "Horror has always been queer, but often it's been buried in subtext. This was an opportunity to have a show with LGBTQ heroes who weren't going through trauma about their identity. Stigma does exist [*here*], but it's not the focus and it doesn't define them." "It doesn't matter where you're from," adds Graham, whose character – along with Jamie and several others – is gay. "The characters take you at face value because none of that other stuff matters in the middle of the ocean."

3 WRIGHT MINDED

Everyone acknowledges the debt to Edgar Wright's film *Shaun Of The Dead*. "This is a similar blend – the comedy never seems forced or the horror pushed too much," says Kennedy. Graham notes that *Wreck* builds the relationships so the ensuing madness is earned in the manner of her favourite horror, *Train To Busan*. Brown acknowledges the influence of landmarks including *Scream*, *Buffy* and cult '80s satire *Society*. "If you have funny characters in a heightened scenario responding to terrible stuff, that's a great way to keep a balance," says Brown.

'Quacky is a fun-looking character – but stare into his eyes and you'll freak out'
OSCAR KENNEDY

4 CABIN JOY

With cruise companies understandably reluctant to allow their vessels to be used, a set was built in an abandoned tyre factory in Northern Ireland. "It was amazingly convincing," says Kennedy. Rowan adds with a shiver: "We were supposed to be in the Bahamas in tight polo shirts and shorts and skirts. I was doing a scene in water and I went from being cold to more cold and then, after I got out, even colder. But I love getting stuck in!"

5 SUIT AND CRY

"Out of context, Quacky is a fun-looking character – but stare into his eyes long enough and you'll freak out," reckons Kennedy. "I hated that suit. Whoever was in it would chase you or walk behind you and pop out. We were all quite jumpy. Not ideal, because my reaction when anybody scares me is to hit them!" **GABRIEL TATE**

WRECK LAUNCHES ON BBC THREE AND IPLAYER IN OCTOBER.

Knife-wielding mascot duck Quacky is all at sea in comedy horror series *Wreck*.

BBC

EXCLUSIVE

NATURE CALLS

RETURN TO DUST Li Ruijun's seasonal love story truly keeps it in the family…

Cao and Ma are devoted to each other.

According to Li Ruijun, it's a minor miracle that his latest film, *Return To Dust*, ever got made. "It took me one year to write, one year to make, one year [*of*] postproduction," the Chinese director explains of a pandemic-interrupted schedule that included the gruelling eight-month shoot split into five parts. Even before that, he had a devil of a job getting it financed. "The genre and the style of this film is not something very popular in terms of commercial potential," he sighs. "The younger generation… I believe they like genre movies more."

In truth, there isn't a lot of action or comedy in *Return To Dust*, but if your tastes skew towards sensitive, sensual filmmaking with a Terrence Malick vibe then you'll be overjoyed. "Love and life," Li says, cryptically, are the themes inherent in a story set in Gaotai County, in China's northwest Gansu Province, where Li grew up and set his earlier movies including *The Old Donkey* (2010) and *Fly With The Crane* (2012).

The "love" part comes as he looks at Ma (Wu Renlin), a farmer who falls into an arranged marriage.

"Ma is a child of the land, a child of the soil," he explains. "Just like the land gives everyone undifferentiated love… Ma also loves people around him without any differentiation." That's particularly so with his wife, Cao (Hai-Qing), a woman so browbeaten and bullied as a child, she can barely control her bladder now. Yet he stays true to her. "They belong to the same class… their fates are very similar," Li suggests. "So they have empathy for each other."

What really impresses is Li's depiction of nature. "I made it very clear at the screenplay stage that nature is a very, very important part of the film," says Li, "because nature is about the relationship of the world. It's about people's way of living. It's about how people build their relations with each other and how to build relations with nature." On the flip side, the director shows that villages are being bulldozed. "This is a global trend, urbanisation… a trend that is unstoppable," he says.

'It's about how people build their relations with each other – and with nature'
LI RUIJUN

Above all, authenticity was key. On set, crops and animals were cared for and the house Ma constructs for his wife was built from scratch, using mud bricks baked in the sun. Fortunately, Li – who also worked as editor and production designer – had help from his male lead, who happens to be his uncle.

"He's a farmer himself in real life. So he's very used to everything in this village." With Li's cousin also starring and his father and brother helping to plant crops, this is one film that can genuinely lay claim to a family atmosphere. **JAMES MOTTRAM**

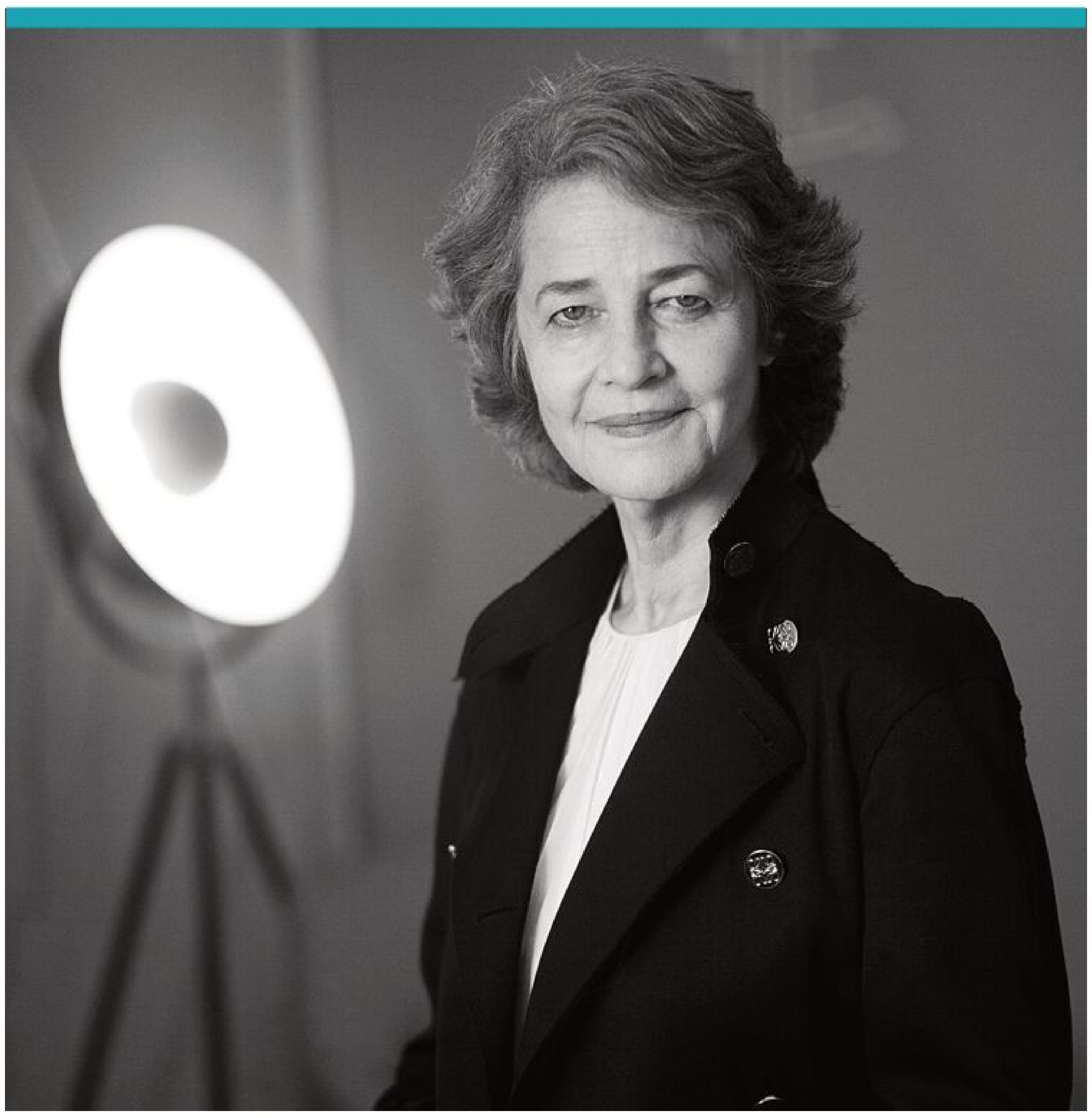
RETURN TO DUST OPENS IN CINEMAS ON 4 NOVEMBER.

MODERN FILMS

THE HERO

CHARLOTTE RAMPLING

THE BRITISH ACTRESS IS JUST THE TONIC...



In *Juniper*, Charlotte Rampling plays Ruth, a gin-swilling ex-war photographer whose life is fading until her combustible grandson arrives. It's yet another unforgettable character for the 76-year-old British icon to add to a collection of risk-heavy films like *The Damned*, *The Night Porter* and *Angel Heart*. She wouldn't have it any other way. "Until I drop," she grins, "that's what I'll do."

Was it the character that made you want to do *Juniper*?

That's got to be it. The character is the hook and then all the rest comes on after that, really. Originally [*in the script*] it was an 82-year-old – and I thought, 'I'm not quite that old yet, thank you!' I don't know what an 82-year-old would do.

Despite all her issues, does Ruth still feel young?

When you get old – in that part of your life, the part I'm in now – you're still as young as ever. And you're in touch with the world, as ever. Even if you could say she's a drunk, but she's a very bright woman. She knows she's going to die but she's probably still as sharp as she ever was.

Looking back, do you think *The Night Porter* set the tone for you in terms of risky work?

Well, the end result of *The Night Porter* for me… I was pretty horrified by the reactions. It was becoming something very powerful. But not necessarily good. So I was saying, "OK, if you're going to start to dabble with these forces, you're going to have a lot of other things to deal with afterwards when people see these films."

What about *Angel Heart*? Do you still sense that it's a cult movie?

That's kind of eternal, isn't it? [*Robert*] De Niro's still a force. Mickey Rourke is, too, in his beaten-up way. Back then he was so beautiful, because he was the young, young unharmed Mickey Rourke. Bless him. And Alan [*Parker*]… God, what a director.

So you weren't scared of dabbling in Satanic themes?

No! I suppose I was up there, tempting fate again. In terms of the role. Again, it's what fires you. It's what brings out the wild in me because I know that's what will keep me burning. Keep me actually wanting to do it.

How was your time on *Dune*?

It's funny. I was in on the first one by [*Alejandro*] Jodorowsky that he never made. I was going to play Jessica. So it was funny to come back and play the Reverend Mother this time. I loved that book and loved the way Denis Villeneuve directs and I thought, 'He's going to do something extraordinary,' and he did. He's got that sensitivity, which is needed on a big blockbuster to give it poetry.

And you will be returning for *Part Two*, due out in 2023?

Mais oui! I'm in on it. Got a few more scenes. That was a promise. He said, "I can't do much on the first one – [*just*] introduce [*you*] – but then the second one…"

Were there other blockbusters you fantasised about doing?

One of the Harry Potter films! I didn't read so much of the books, but I did see some of the films with my kids at the time. I thought they were really good.

How do you approach your career now?

Well, I do lots of bits and pieces in films. I take small parts. Like *Dune*, for example. Or *Assassin's Creed*; I did a very small part with Jeremy Irons. Two or three scenes. And people loved it. You also dare to join up with other things and be part of just moments. You have to be very flexible. I don't need to wait [*for a lead*] because I don't want lead roles all the time. I like to keep on working on quite a regular basis, but I don't want lead roles all the time that will take you two months, and you go away on location for a long time. It doesn't suit me necessarily.

JAMES MOTTRAM

JUNIPER OPENS IN CINEMAS ON 23 SEPTEMBER.

'I DON'T WANT LEAD ROLES ALL THE TIME – IT DOESN'T SUIT ME NECESSARILY'

The upcoming *Juniper* (top), plus career highlights *Dune* (centre) and *Angel Heart*.

PARKLAND DISTRIBUTION, WARNER BROS, STUDIOCANAL

dea

d end

After 44 years, the blood feud between Laurie Strode and Michael Myers is coming to a killer conclusion in Halloween Ends, the "passionate" and "unexpected" climax to David Gordon Green's latter-day slasher trilogy. Ultimate final girl Jamie Lee Curtis and the 'ween team reveal the story behind a grudge match decades in the making.

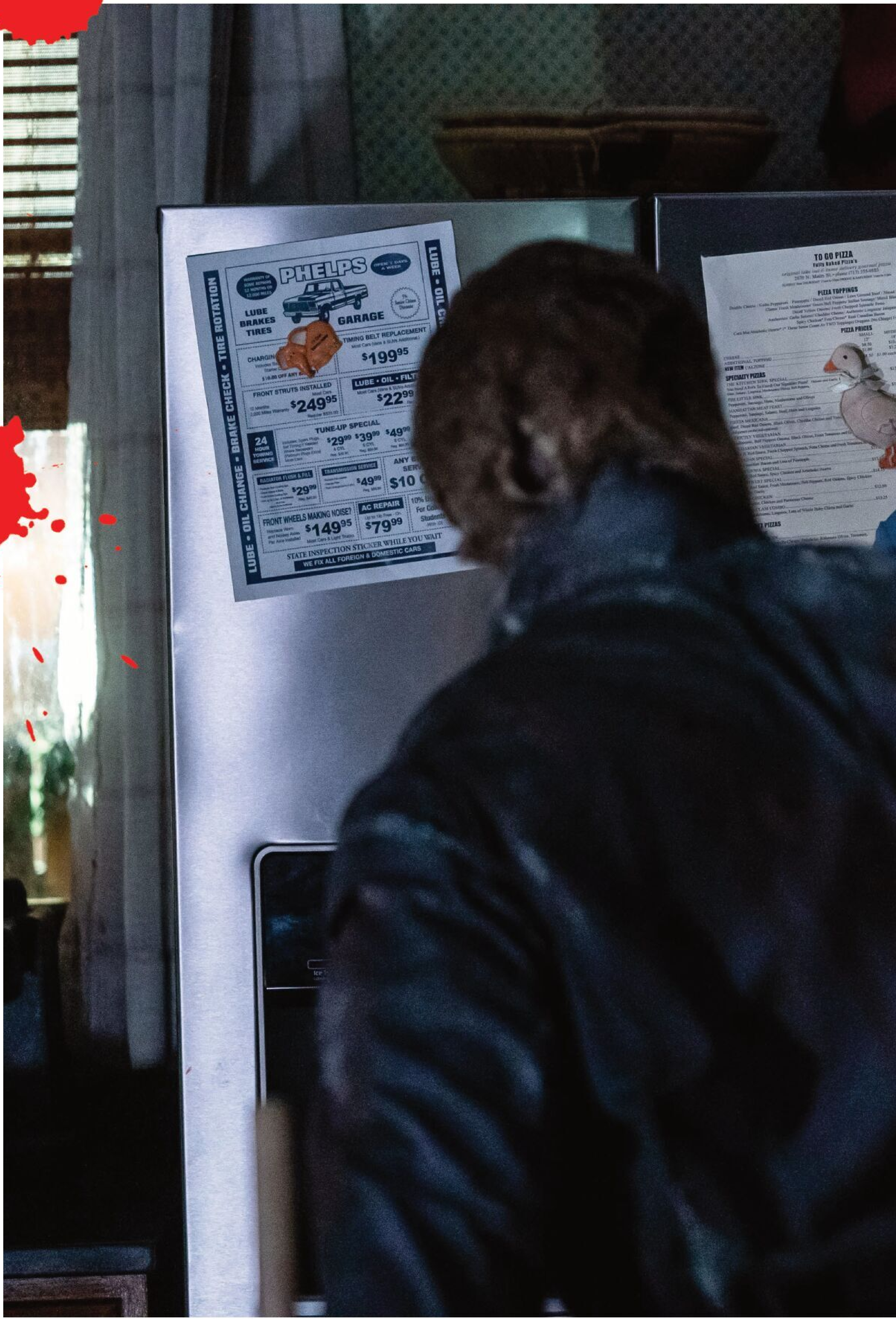
WORDS JORDAN FARLEY

It was 4am in Savannah, Georgia when Jamie Lee Curtis said goodbye to Laurie Strode.

Owing to the practicalities of production, Curtis' final scene as Strode wasn't the conclusion of *Halloween Ends*. Neither was Curtis filming the long-awaited showdown with babysitter butcher Michael Myers. Instead it was a quiet, contemplative moment featuring Laurie alone in her car by the side of the road. Shortly after, as Curtis watched playback of the shot from basecamp over the shoulder of sequel trilogy director David Gordon Green, the magnitude of what she was looking at hit like a chef's knife gliding between the ribs.

"I realised that would be the last time I ever saw Laurie Strode," Curtis tells *Total Film*, on the verge of tears – and not for the last time – while discussing a film she is adamant will be her last as *Halloween*'s lone survivor. "It was very powerful for me. I wept. David wept. We all recognised that moment, that it was the wrap for Laurie Strode and me. And this community of artists who made these movies. It was a big deal."

Neither Andi Matichak (who has played Laurie's granddaughter Allyson Nelson across all three Green *Halloweens*), nor James Jude Courtney (the man behind Myers' mask since 2018) were scheduled to work that day, but both made the early morning pilgrimage to the Savannah location shoot to bear witness to film history. "My heart just broke open," says Matichak. "It was incredible to know that this is it for Jamie as Laurie Strode." "It was bittersweet for all of us," adds Courtney. "She's definitely ready to put it down. She's carried this for 40-some-odd years."


PHELPS
GARAGE
LUBE BRAKES TIRES
LUBE • OIL CHANGE • BRAKE CHECK • TIRE ROTATION
STATE INSPECTION STICKER WHILE YOU WAIT
WE FIX ALL FOREIGN & DOMESTIC CARS
TO GO PIZZA

Jamie Lee Curtis returns as Laurie Strode, with James Jude Courtney once again in the boiler suit as The Shape.

UNIVERSAL

Green recalls things a little differently. "[*Jamie's last day*] was like her first day," he says, clearly a glass-half-full kind of guy. "She shows up 45 minutes early, ready to party, and kicks ass all day, and brings the coffee truck and the ice-cream truck and the taco truck, and is the cheerleader of optimism and energy. She is the greatest muse and emotional support I've ever had alongside a journey of filmmaking frustrations, for sure."

Unsurprisingly, Curtis describes *Halloween Ends* as "the most emotional experience for me of all of the [Halloween] movies". The significance of leaving behind the character that launched Curtis' film career in 1978, forever changing the trajectory of her life, certainly played into that. But equally important was the story that

Green and trilogy co-writer Danny McBride have chosen to tell with *Ends*. Enlisting a pair of fresh voices behind the scenes in screenwriters Chris Bernier and Paul Brad Logan, specifically to "kick us in the nuts and help us do something unexpected", Green and McBride conceived *Ends* as a very different *Halloween* to the films that preceded it.

"As a filmmaker, I get bored doing the same thing," Green notes, a fact evident across his eclectic career in cinema, which has taken in projects as variable as stoner comedy *Pineapple Express* and PTSD drama *Stronger*. "I intentionally didn't want this to be another bloodbath like the last one, which was fun and cathartic, but nobody wants to see that again. This one is more relationship-driven. There's love stories involved. I would say it's more passionate, in a way. That was really fun, but it's scary to do that, too, because some people only want to fast-forward to 'a man with a knife, stabbing people'. And this has a lot more to it than that."

"It's really bold, and it's really unexpected," adds Matichak, one of the few survivors of *Halloween Kills*' indiscriminate slaughter, which saw Judy Greer's Karen Nelson, Anthony Michael Hall's Tommy Doyle and Dylan Arnold's Cameron Elam brutally culled following fateful encounters with The Shape. Of the extended cast, only Will Patton's Officer Hawkins – revealed as one of the officers on the scene in 1978 during the film's opening flashback – and Kyle Richards' Lindsey Wallace lived to fight another day and reprise their roles for this finale.

TAKING TIME OUT

Though the first two films unfolded, for the most part, over a single day and very long night, with *Halloween Kills* picking up minutes after *Halloween* 2018's fiery finale, trilogy capper *Halloween Ends* is breaking series convention with a four-year time jump that will bring the action up to the present day, and find the once battle-hardened, emotionally guarded Laurie in a very different place following the death of her daughter at Michael's hands.

"By the time you meet Laurie Strode, she has gotten help," Curtis reveals. "Help to process the level of violence that has been perpetrated against her and her family. She's done the work. And there's a moment at the

➳

'I realised that would be the last time I ever saw Laurie Strode'

JAMIE LEE CURTIS

➳ beginning of the movie where you actually meet Laurie – I'm not going to say she's as innocent as she was back when she was a 17-year-old girl – but she has a layer of hope about her. That's a beautiful place to start a really tragic, incredibly violent ending."

Laurie and Allyson are living together when we're reacquainted with the surviving Strodes, and "have a good relationship" according to Matichak, having dealt with their "shared trauma and loss together", though Allyson hasn't committed to the work quite as wholeheartedly as Laurie. For Green, the opportunity to evolve and even reinvent well-established characters was a key reason to move the story forward in such drastic fashion. But there's a big question the time jump inevitably raises: where has Michael been for the last four years?

'You cannot conclude this story without them coming in contact again'

JAMIE LEE CURTIS

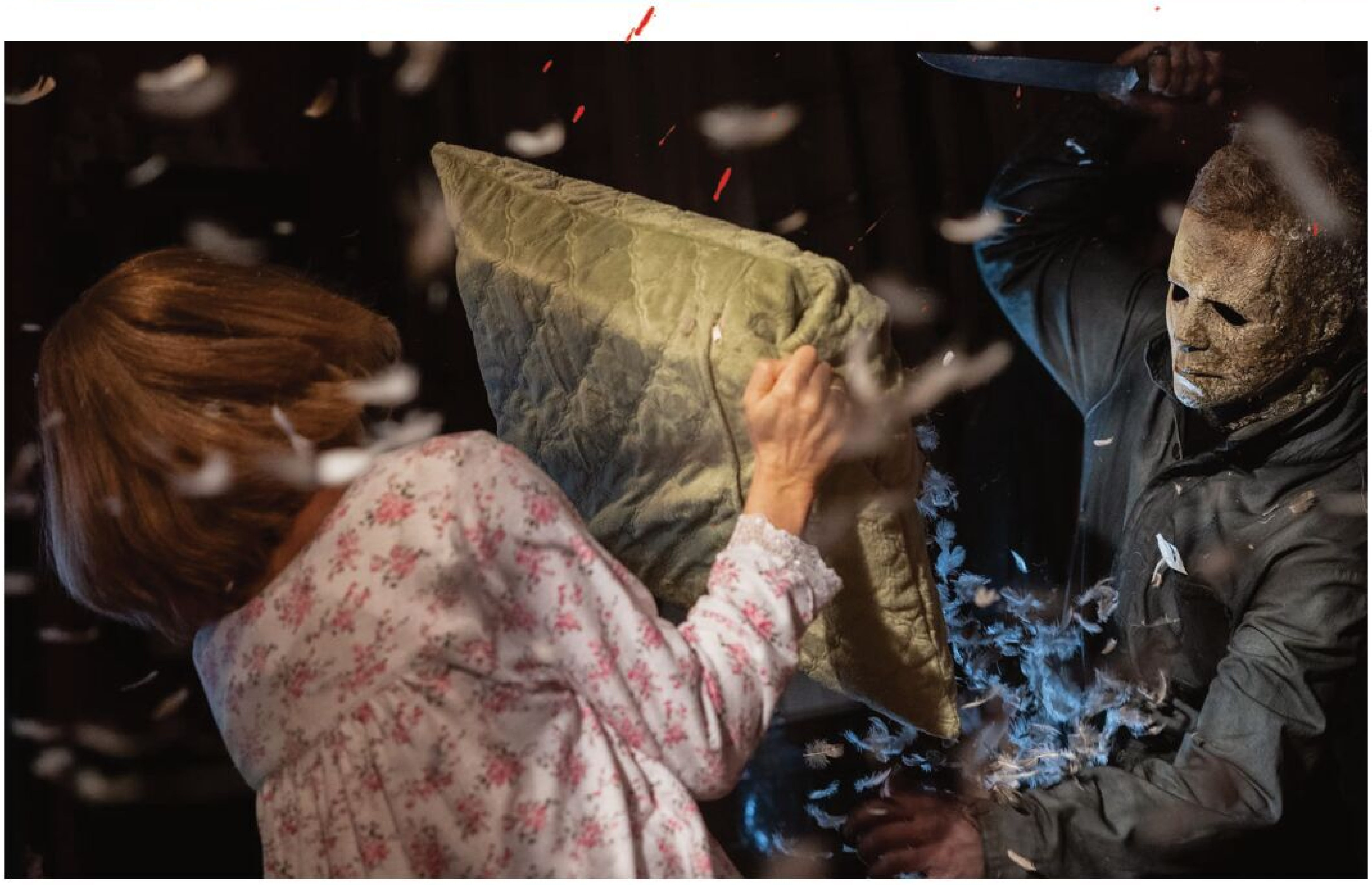
MAN OF MYSTERY

Green bluntly acknowledges, "We don't really explain that," arguing, as with all things Myers, that the mystery is better left intact. "It's like: I don't want to see where Jaws goes to sleep at night when I'm watching a shark movie," the director says. "I want to see him when he pops up, and he's got an appetite!" Instead, characters within the movie will voice questions and theories that may or may not touch on the truth, most notably via Keraun Harris' radio DJ Willy The Kid (an homage to Adrienne Barbeau's DJ Stevie Wayne in *The Fog*, one of several ways in which the Carpenter "vernacular" creeps into the film, according to Green). "We have a radio disc jockey who is full of conspiracy theories about Michael: where's he been? Is he supernatural? If as an audience member you're not wondering it, you will be."

Still MIA at the outset of *Halloween Ends*, Michael's return to Haddonfield isn't exactly the film's inciting incident. Instead, events surrounding new character Corey Cunningham (Rohan Campbell) – a young man who is accused of murder when a boy he is babysitting dies in his care – once again raise the spectre of innocent bloodshed in Haddonfield. "The focus of the town now is put on this other person, as if there's an infection that has been caught," Curtis says, with gravitas that sends a shiver down *TF*'s spine. "That's a really scary place to be. There's a very hopeful beginning, and then that gets crushed very quickly."

Describing Cunningham as "a central, if not *the* central thread of this new movie", Green highlights the fact that it's Cunningham who ultimately brings Laurie, Allyson and Michael back together after almost half a decade. "We envisaged this character as a way that we could connect Laurie and Allyson and Michael," Green explains, cryptically. "And in a way that gave insight to all three of them and let us ask questions that we couldn't through their perspective beforehand – including Michael."

Controversially, *Halloween Kills* kept Michael and Laurie apart for the duration as Laurie recovered from a knife to the gut in Haddonfield Memorial Hospital. Curtis applauds that creative choice, and the way it allowed for the focus to shift from Laurie and her immediate family to the diverse denizens of Haddonfield, but concedes, "You cannot conclude this story without them coming in contact again. This final moment between the Final Girl and Michael Myers has to come, and there will be blood."



Andi Matichak plays Allyson Nelson, Laurie's granddaughter (top).

Original Shape Nick Castle continues to 'voice' Michael Myers (above and opposite).

Q&A

JAMES JUDE COURTNEY

Meet the man behind the mask...

What's the secret to playing Michael Myers?
The way that I move is very rooted in watching my cat hunt – Parcival, who passed away right after this film. He was definitely a part of this character. And then it's aikido, because the way you move in aikido you never really lift your feet off the ground, so there's a certain gliding to it.

How closely did you work with original Shape Nick Castle?
We are very, very close friends but we have never once talked about the character! What I did was I watched Nick in the 1978 [*film*]. There's one scene where he's walking camera left to camera right in a backyard. And in my head, I just went, 'I've got it.' So I captured whatever he created. But I think it's really beautiful that Nick is still, in *Halloween Ends*, going to do the breathing. Which means the spirit of the OG, and whatever it is that I was able to create, have been melded once again.

Why does The Shape endure as a horror-movie icon?
I think they've tapped into some archetypal power of myth. The interesting thing I've found is that the horror fans are amongst the kindest, gentlest people you'll ever meet. I have had so many personal letters from people who have gone through insane trauma, and they have watched these films, and it's reached them. What Debra Hill and John Carpenter created is a part of that subconscious release system. But I'm not a psychologist – I could be talking completely out of my ass right now!

Do they let you keep the mask?
Yes, I have the mask from 2018, and I have the mask from *Kills*. I get the mask from *Ends* within weeks. It's in my contract. But here's the thing, man – I'll never put those masks on again. I keep them in a vault. But when I bring them out for people to see, they marvel at not only the artistry of [*special make-up FX designer*] Christopher Nelson but the energy that's in that mask. It's palpable. **JORDAN FARLEY**

“Fans are going to get the ultimate, incredible showdown that they’ve been waiting this long to get,” adds Matichak, who knows more than most about showdowns with The Shape, having survived two. For Green, who already brought the house down (literally) with a game of cat and mouse between Myers and Strode in *Halloween* (2018), it was important to offer long-serving fans something they haven’t quite seen before. “I wanted it to not just be a great, badass, *They Live* fight scene,” Green claims. “I wanted it to be two characters that have spent over four decades looking each other in the eye, and saying, ‘One of us ain’t going to make it.’”

> **‘Michael is a really tough character to write, because he doesn’t talk’**
>
> **DAVID GORDON GREEN**

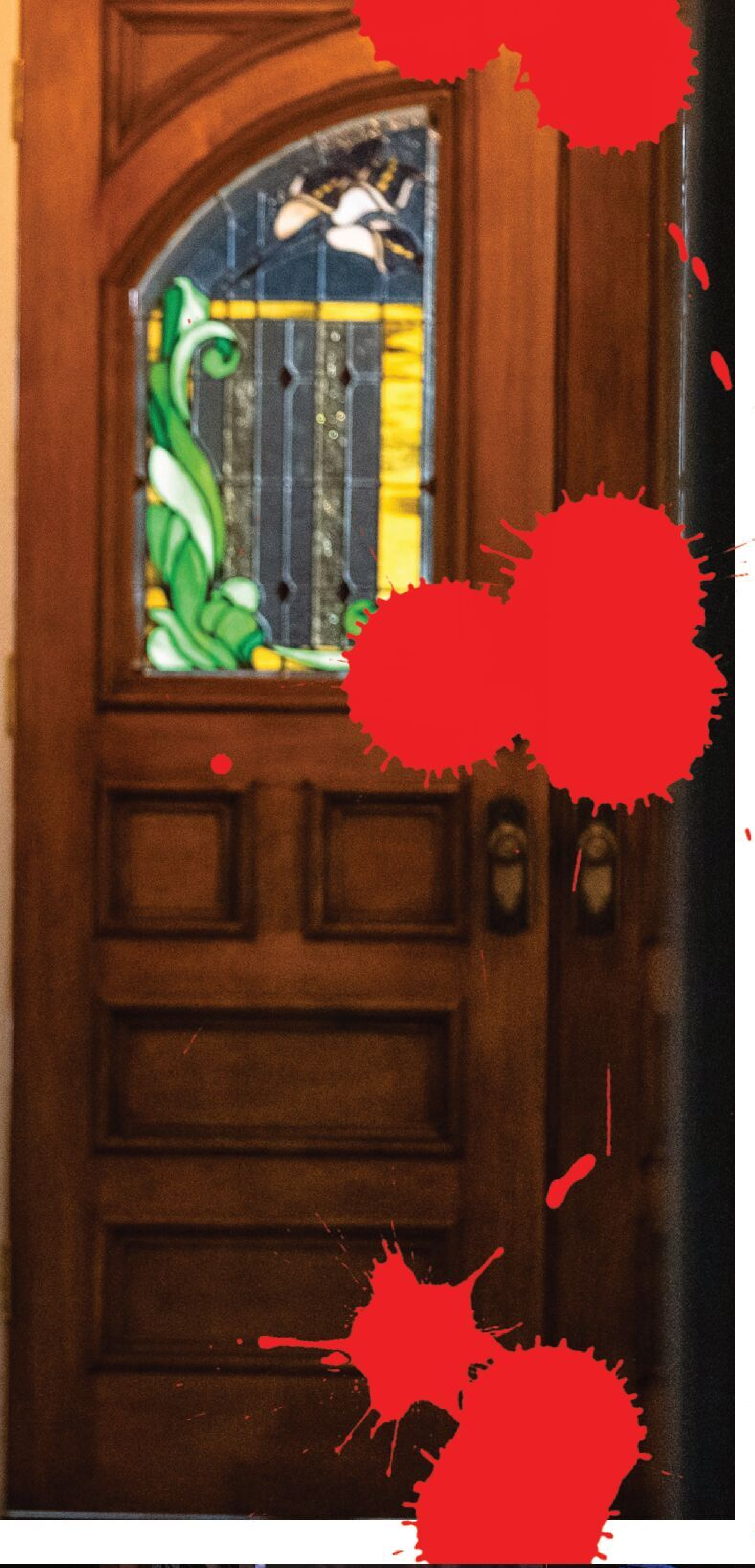
Though Myers was originally played by Nick Castle (who returns to ‘voice’ the breathy boogeyman in *Ends*), actor James Jude Courtney has inhabited the boiler suit for all three films in the sequel trilogy. Standing at 6’3” and in “insane shape” for his Myers swan song, Courtney was far from a pushover on set, but was put through the wringer on *Ends*. “It was incredibly physical,” a cheerful Courtney says, reaffirming the rule that the scariest people on screen are often the most affable in person. “I managed to pull a concussion out of this one! It was fun.”

Thanks to the enforced separation during the making of *Halloween Kills*, Courtney and Curtis didn’t spend a single day on set together (“They even split us up in our photo-shoots!” Courtney remarks), while on *Halloween* (2018) he chose to stay as far away from Curtis as possible, partly to give her space and partly because when Courtney is in character as The Shape he doesn’t talk to anyone, and can typically be found lurking in some dimly lit corner, scaring the stuffing out of anyone who happens to walk by. “I’m sort of Method that way,” he says with a chuckle. *Ends*, in complete contrast, was an intensely collaborative experience.

Kyle Richards returns as Lindsey Wallace (right).

Will Patton is back as Deputy Frank Hawkins (middle).

Rohan Campbell plays murder suspect Corey Cunningham (far right).



"We're going to have the requisite violence," Courtney assures. "But we're going to a deeper place, spiritually [*in* Halloween Ends]. Because now we're culminating 44 years of this experience between Laurie Strode and The Shape." To this day Courtney and Curtis can't talk about their final scene together without tearing up. "And that happened when we were beginning to shoot our great, big, grand finale," he says. "She and I stepped off to the side to talk through the beats. We just stood there with tears flooding out of our eyes. That entire scene, and everything that happens between us, was so powerful, and so erotic, and so loving... there's so much there. This is taking this series, and these characters, to a place they've never been before."

INTO THE UNKNOWN

That, as Green acknowledges, is a double-edged sword when you're dealing with a series and a character as iconic as *Halloween* and Michael Myers because, "Some people aren't looking for fresh. A lot of people are just literally looking to watch the original John Carpenter movie again." For those folk, Carpenter's masterpiece still exists. So does Green's 2018 *Halloween* which, the director admits, "played it safe" to help reignite enthusiasm for a series in the doldrums. *Ends* will be the series' riskiest entry since *Halloween III* by design, with Myers also being pushed into new spaces.

"Michael is a really tough character to write because he doesn't talk, and he doesn't have any particular motivation in a traditional, villainous way," Green notes. "There's an absence of emotion and expression in his character, which is counter-intuitive to any drama that you really want to unfold. So it's finding new and inventive ways to be able to put him in circumstances. We certainly don't want an explanation to Michael's motivation. I think it would betray the character of The Shape that we've honoured. But we have to be able to engineer fresh dramatic situations out of his activities."

For Curtis, *Ends* also presented the opportunity to explore a question that has been on her mind for more than 40 years – does Laurie Strode feel responsible for Myers' seasonal rampage? "That is ultimately the question of the movie, which is: who is responsible?" Curtis teases. "For a long time, Laurie Strode believed that, for reasons she could never understand, she was responsible for all of the death and destruction that surrounded her life. By the beginning of this movie, she has been disabused of that, because she is just a human being who just did everything she could to protect her family. She was just a little girl who had some really bad shit happen to her. And that's it."

Plenty of entries in long-running horror franchises have the words 'ends' or 'final' in their titles – words that typically have more to do with marketing than the substance of the films themselves. Case in point: there are two 'final' *Friday The 13th* films, neither of which are the final films in that series. Going back to Green and McBride's earliest meetings with Curtis, Carpenter and studio shot-callers, *Halloween Ends* was pitched as a closing chapter for Laurie Strode. ➳

KILL COUNT

Who has the strongest bloodlust out of Michael Myers and his slasher rivals, Jason Voorhees and Freddy Krueger?

3. FREDDY KRUEGER

Total Kills 49

Freddy offs just four people in the original *A Nightmare On Elm Street*. His busiest movie is the first sequel *Freddy's Revenge*, in which he claws his way to 14 kills. His overall tally is spread across nine movies – including 2003 crossover *Freddy Vs Jason* and 2010 reboot *A Nightmare On Elm Street* – but Krueger has another 20-odd deaths to his name if you include his killing of children when he was human, before the movies begin. We meet him after the parents of Elm Street have torched him, as he now haunts teenagers' dreams.

2. JASON VOORHEES

Total Kills 163

Jason murders no one in the original *Friday The 13th* – his mom, Mrs. Voorhees, is the killer. That trivia was used in *Scream*, but here's another nugget: he has no kills in 1985's *Friday The 13th: A New Beginning* either, because the killer turned out to be a paramedic called Roy. Jason's highest kill count is 25 in *Jason Goes To Hell: The Final Friday* (it wasn't). He actually has many more kills to his name if you consider the people in the ship that sank in *Friday The 13th Part VIII: Jason Takes Manhattan*, and in the space station that blew up in *Jason X*.

1. MICHAEL MYERS

Total Kills 170

Yes, Myers sneaks it – and that's before *Halloween Ends* inevitably boosts his total. Michael ends 92 people in the first eight *Halloween* movies (well, seven of the eight, because he's not in *Halloween III: Season Of The Witch*), then more than 40 in the two Rob Zombie films. His highest single entry is last year's *Halloween Kills*, though: 11 of the 27 were the firefighters who perish in the burning house early doors. And it all starts so innocuously (well, relatively speaking), with just five kills in John Carpenter's original masterpiece. **JAMIE GRAHAM**

‘Fans are going to get the **ultimate, incredible showdown** that they’ve been waiting this long to get’

ANDI MATICHAK

➳ And while studio economics would dictate that Michael Myers will return, likely in some rebooted form down the line, it's extremely unlikely to involve this creative team, particularly Green, Curtis and Courtney, all of whom repeatedly emphasise that this is their last trip to Haddonfield.

That presented a rare opportunity for Green – a true 'final' chapter in a series that has always kept things open-ended, going all the way back to Michael's disappearing act at the climax of Carpenter's trailblazing slasher. The closing moments of Green's film, and trilogy as a whole – the images, sounds and emotions that will be rattling around audiences' heads as they walk bleary-eyed into the night – are at the forefront of Green's mind when he hops on the phone with *TF* in early August, less than three months out from release.

SENSE OF CLOSURE

"It's really exciting [*to be ending things*]. Fuck yeah!" Green exclaims. "And it's nerve-racking. I've moved around the last few scenes of the movie in various orders, and I've been playing with music. How do I want to feel [*when*] I walk out of the theatre, thinking that there's not going to be another one next year? So that's the sculpture." If you walked out of *Halloween Kills* feeling brutalised and dejected that was by design, but the intention isn't the same for *Ends*. "This one is a good time at the movies," Green says. "Let's have a blast, ride the roller coaster with a few unexpected turns, and walk away feeling complete. That's what I want."

For Green, who first watched *Halloween* aged 11, bonded with McBride over their shared love of the series in college and still has a VHS copy of the film on the shelf of his office, it's been a filmmaking endeavour like no other. Often that has meant "rising to different fears, and different anxieties, and different frustrations as a filmmaker", or to put it more poetically "looking at my

'This one is a good time at the movies. Let's have a blast'

DAVID GORDON GREEN

The Shape brings Haddonfield to its knees (right).

Jamie Lee Curtis with director David Gordon Green on set (below right).

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own cosmic bogeyman", according to Green, but with the finish line in sight there's nothing he'd change. "Without speaking of any success or failure this movie might have, I feel like I've been able to tell a complete story that began before I knew I was telling it. And I've been able to do that successfully."

As we speak, *Halloween Ends* isn't quite finished. Green is in New York finishing up the film's sound mix, and has started a new daily ritual: always walking the 45-minute journey to and from his home and the studio. "I do that walk there and back because it's really emotional to be wrapping this stuff up, and I really want to appreciate what I'm walking into at the beginning of the day, because we finally got our picture to where I want it to be," says Green, who hasn't taken any of his experiences on *Halloween* for granted. "So it is a deep breath of like: 'We're really ending this.'"

That sense of finality is felt by no one more keenly than Jamie Lee Curtis. When she first played Laurie Strode in 1978 Curtis wasn't even 20 years old. Now 63, and leaving Strode behind for the last time, Curtis is in a more reflective mood than ever.

"I recently saw a photograph of Laurie from 1978 that Kim Gottlieb, who was our stills photographer, shot. And it moves me to see me then, to be honest," Curtis says, now pausing to catch her breath between tears. "In the same way that Laurie doesn't understand why all this is happening, I don't understand why all this is happening to me. Why did I get that moment back in 1978? What made John and Debra [*Hill*] think I should be Laurie? They saw something that I don't think I even saw. That was John and Debra's great skill – creating that character in a town that is like every other town in the United States who then comes into contact with the epitome of evil. And 44 years later, we're still interested in that confluence of those two things. That's why, at the end of the day, *Halloween* stands above all others."

HALLOWEEN ENDS OPENS IN CINEMAS ON 14 OCTOBER.

SPOILER ALERT!

The End

THE 25 GREATEST MOVIE ENDINGS EVER

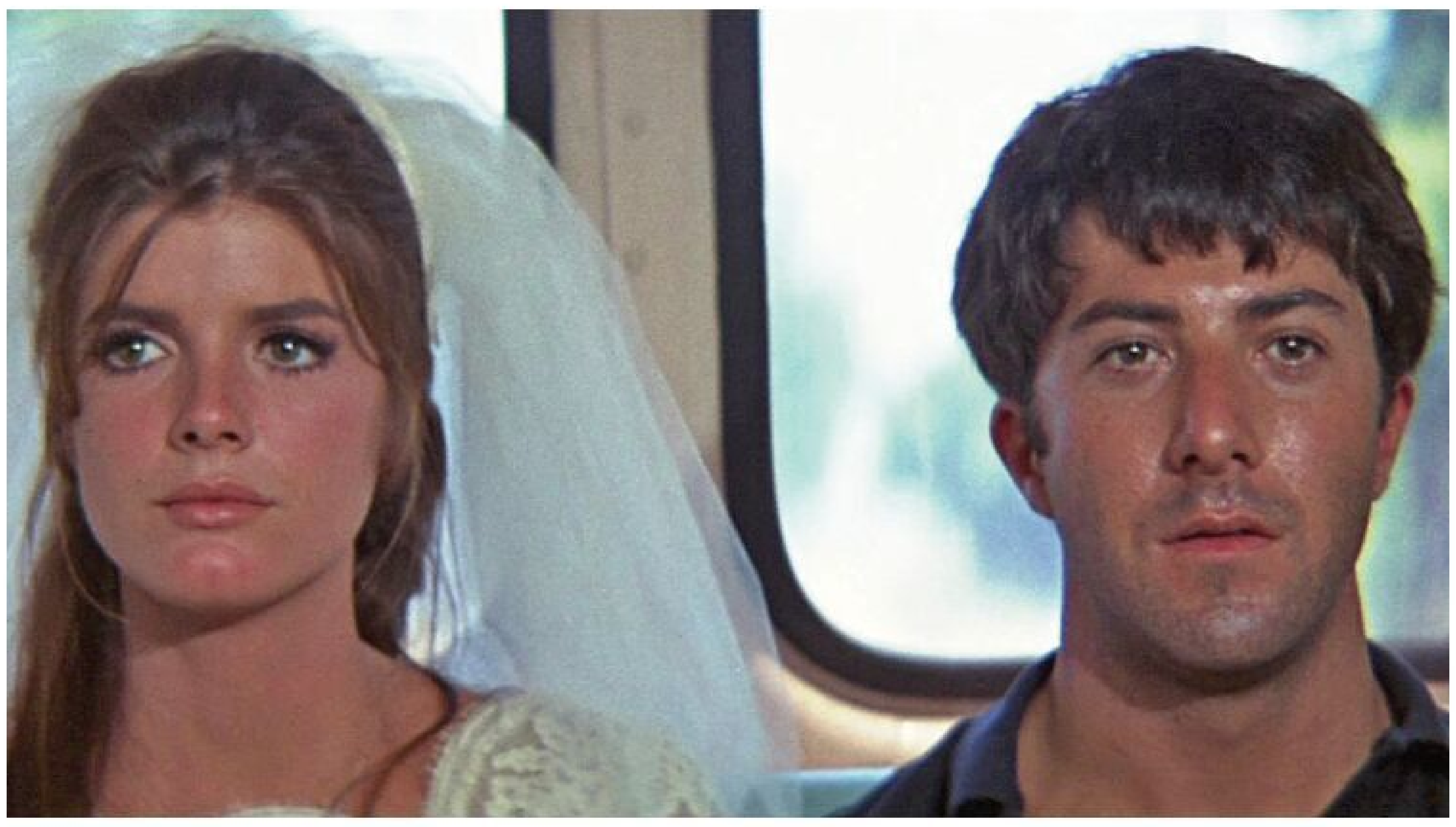
As the *Halloween* series draws to a close, *Total Film* looks back at the finest conclusions in cinema history... Spoilers guaranteed. **WORDS RICHARD EDWARDS**

The final scenes of a movie can make or break an entire picture. However good the previous couple of hours, if the last five minutes go spectacularly wrong, you could be looking at the difference between a classic and an also-ran. The best movie endings should feel consistent with what's come before and emotionally satisfying.

You can have the credits roll after a massive cliffhanger, have your heroes going down in a blaze of glory, let the bad guys win, or make the audience question everything they've just seen with a killer twist. All of the above – and many more – are represented in our list of the best movie endings of all time.

Spread across 80 years of cinema history, the 25 movies are listed chronologically, rather than being ranked – frankly, putting them into a countdown would have melted our minds. How do you decide whether the twist ending of *The Usual Suspects* is better than the emotional close of *Casablanca*? Or if *Planet Of The Apes*' big reveal trumps *The Italian Job*'s literal cliffhanger?

And with this being a list of the best movie endings, it should go without saying that we're going to be telling you what happens at the close of a *lot* of films, so there are many, many spoilers ahead. You have been warned...



Casablanca 1942

Arguably the greatest propaganda film of all time – if you're ever in any doubt about doing the right thing in wartime, just think, 'What would Rick Blaine do?' – also has one of the best movie endings. Rick could have Ilsa, the love of his life, stay in Casablanca with him, but instead he sacrifices his happiness to make sure she boards a plane bound for Portugal with her husband, resistance fighter Victor.

Rick's bittersweet farewell speech is one of the most quoted of all time – "You'll regret it. Maybe not today, maybe not tomorrow, but soon and for the rest of your life"; "We'll always have Paris"; "Here's looking at you, kid" – and has made generations of viewers weep. At least Rick gets the consolation of hanging out with his new friend, the dodgy chief of police. "Louis, I think this is the beginning of a beautiful friendship." Told you it was quotable…

Some Like It Hot 1959

Like *Citizen Kane* and *The Third Man*, Billy Wilder's classic comedy is a shoo-in for most critics' countdowns of the best movies of all time. What *Some Like it Hot* has over its rivals, however, is arguably the greatest final line in cinema. Having spent most of the movie masquerading as a woman to hide from gangsters, double-bass player Jerry makes such an endearing Daphne that ageing millionaire Osgood takes a shine to him – and won't take no for an answer to his proposal of marriage.

Increasingly exasperated as his excuses fall flat, Jerry resorts to pulling off his wig and telling Osgood, "I'm a man!" The unfazed Osgood simply replies, "Well, nobody's perfect" – and there's not much you can add to that.

Dr. Strangelove Or: How I Learned To Stop Worrying And Love The Bomb 1964

Made at the height of the Cold War, Stanley Kubrick's nuclear-war satire may be a comedy but it doesn't take the easy option. Indeed, few serious dramas of the era would have dared to end the world in the sort of mutually-assured-destruction scenario that plays out at the end of *Dr. Strangelove*.

After an American bomber fails to receive the message that their mission has been aborted, the Soviets retaliate and the movie ends with a montage of monochrome mushroom clouds – backed by a soundtrack of Vera Lynn's World War 2 standard, 'We'll Meet Again'. It's one of the best movie endings because it's simultaneously funny, tragic and powerful. The close of *Terminator 3: Rise Of The Machines* went down a similarly nihilistic route, and the sight of the missiles raining down is, by some distance, the most memorable bit of the movie.

The Graduate 1967

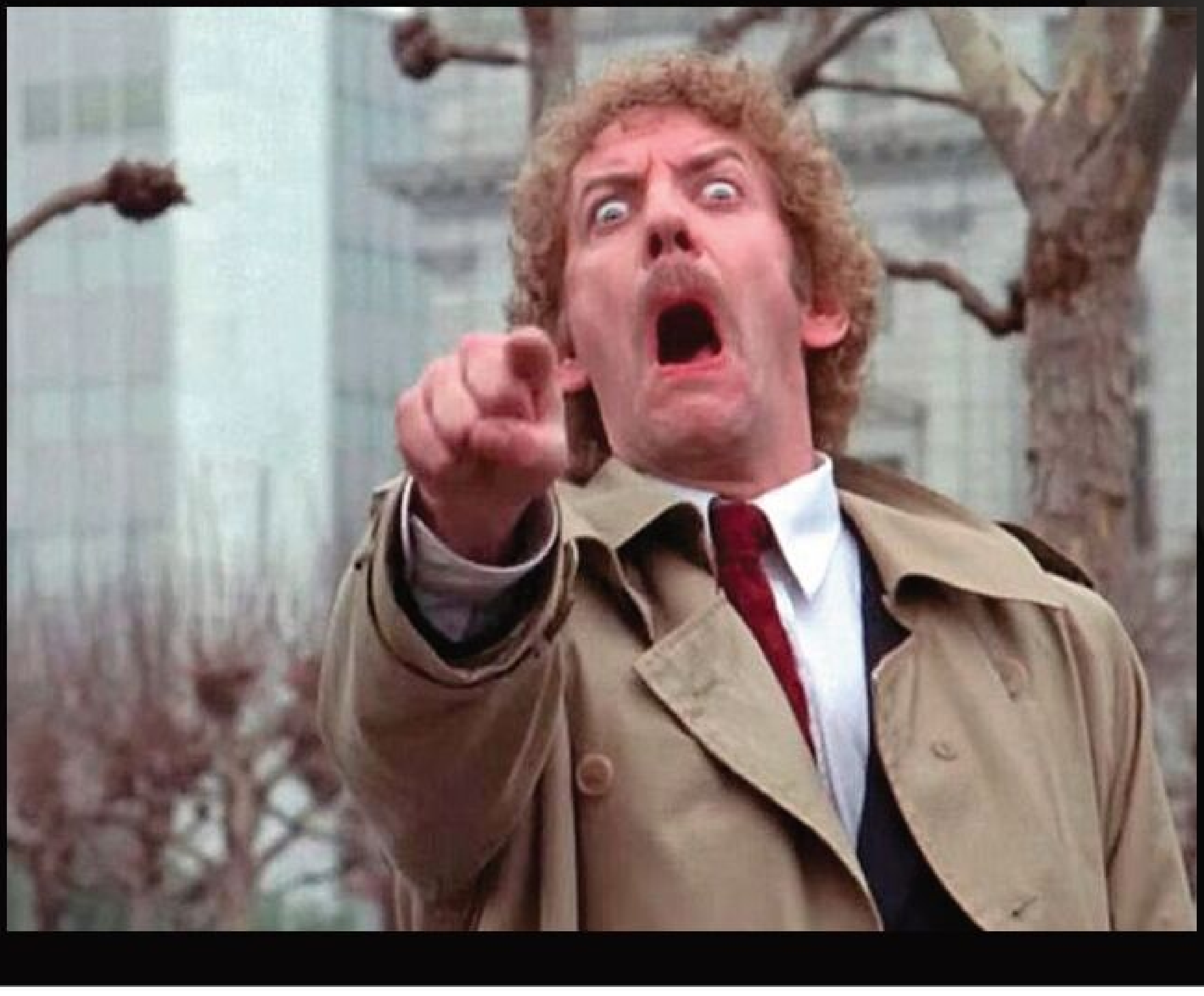
The most unromantic romantic movie ending of all time? With his ex-girlfriend Elaine (daughter of the famous Mrs. Robinson) set to marry another man, eponymous graduate Ben Braddock races across LA to interrupt the wedding. After his car breaks down, it turns out a breakneck sprint isn't enough to get him to the church on time, and he arrives too late to stop Elaine tying the knot. But as he screams her name from the balcony, she eventually calls back and decides to abandon her groom to go with Ben – despite the protestations of everyone else.

There's a sting in the tail, however. After the euphoria of escaping the scrum in the church, the new couple end up leaving on a bus – but it's not necessarily a happily ever after. The Simon and Garfunkel-backed final shot of the pair on the back seat – Elaine still in her wedding gown – shows two people thinking, 'What the hell have I done?' An idealised vision of the '60s evaporates in an instant.

Planet Of The Apes 1968

Probably the greatest final reveal in cinema history. American astronaut Taylor has been through hell as the prisoner of a bunch of intelligent, talking apes, but it feels like things are looking up when he rides to freedom across the wastes of the Forbidden Zone. It's already been established that the planet of the apes was home to an advanced human civilisation before the simians took over, but that doesn't prepare Taylor for the ultimate kick in the teeth.

The Statue of Liberty is usually an impressive, spectacular sight, but nobody expects to see it on the beach of an alien planet. It turns out he's been on Earth all along, and that the human race had obliterated itself with nuclear weapons. "Those bastards finally did it," indeed.



On Her Majesty's Secret Service 1969

James Bond doesn't usually deal in emotions – they tend to get in the way of being a lethal assassin – but the end of George Lazenby's only outing as 007 packs a real punch. Just married to Diana Rigg's Tracy di Vicenzo, Bond has stopped by the roadside with his new wife when Blofeld and his henchwoman Irma Bunt perform a clinical drive-by shooting.

Tracy is shot in the head, leaving Bond to cradle her lifeless body. "It's quite all right, really," he tells a passing policeman. "She's having a rest. There's no hurry, you see. We have all the time in the world…" Even 50+ years later, Bond has never seemed so human – even as *No Time To Die*'s bold closing gambit referenced *OHMSS* as Daniel Craig's Bond signed off.

The Italian Job 1969

The cinematic embodiment of the swinging '60s was always going to face a tricky dilemma when it came to wrapping things up. Charlie Croker and his gang of Mini-driving crooks are so damn likeable that you'd never want anything bad to happen to them, but, at the same time, such a family-friendly caper couldn't really end with a bunch of cons getting away with the loot.

The Italian Job has its cake and eats it, however, as the team pulls off the gold-bullion heist-of-the-century in Turin, seemingly driving away to freedom until their bus loses control and ends up dangling precariously over an Alpine ravine in one of cinema's most literal cliffhangers. As everything weighs in the balance – thieves at one end of the bus, gold at the other – Croker makes sure the audience is left hanging too. "Hang on a minute, lads. I got a great idea…"

The Godfather 1972

Decades before *Breaking Bad* delighted in showing a good man's descent to the dark side, Francis Ford Coppola's Mafia epic wreaked similar havoc on Michael Corleone's soul. As the former golden boy and war hero ascends to the head of his crime family, he goes to brutal lengths that even his late father, Don Vito, would never have dared. As well as engineering the simultaneous last-act assassinations of the heads of the rival Five Families, Michael arranges the murder of his brother-in-law, Carlo, in punishment for his part in older brother Sonny's death.

The most chilling moment comes at the climax, as Michael calmly tells wife Kay that he had no part in Carlo's killing – coldly adding that she should never ask about his business again. The closing shot, where one of Michael's henchmen closes his office door in front of her, is final proof that the good man she married is long gone.

The Wicker Man 1973

There's never any doubt there's something sinister going on when devout Christian policeman Sergeant Howie arrives on the remote Scottish island of Summerisle to investigate the disappearance of a young girl. But it's not until the final act that you realise he's the unwitting pawn lured to the island as part of the islanders' plan to sacrifice a virgin in a pagan ritual.

There's something insidious and relentless about the way the trap slowly closes around Howie, and as soon as he's shut inside the giant wicker man of the title, you know there'll be no escape from his fiery grave. Uncompromising, dramatically perfect, and the final shot of Howie trapped inside the burning monument is one of the most powerful in cinema history.

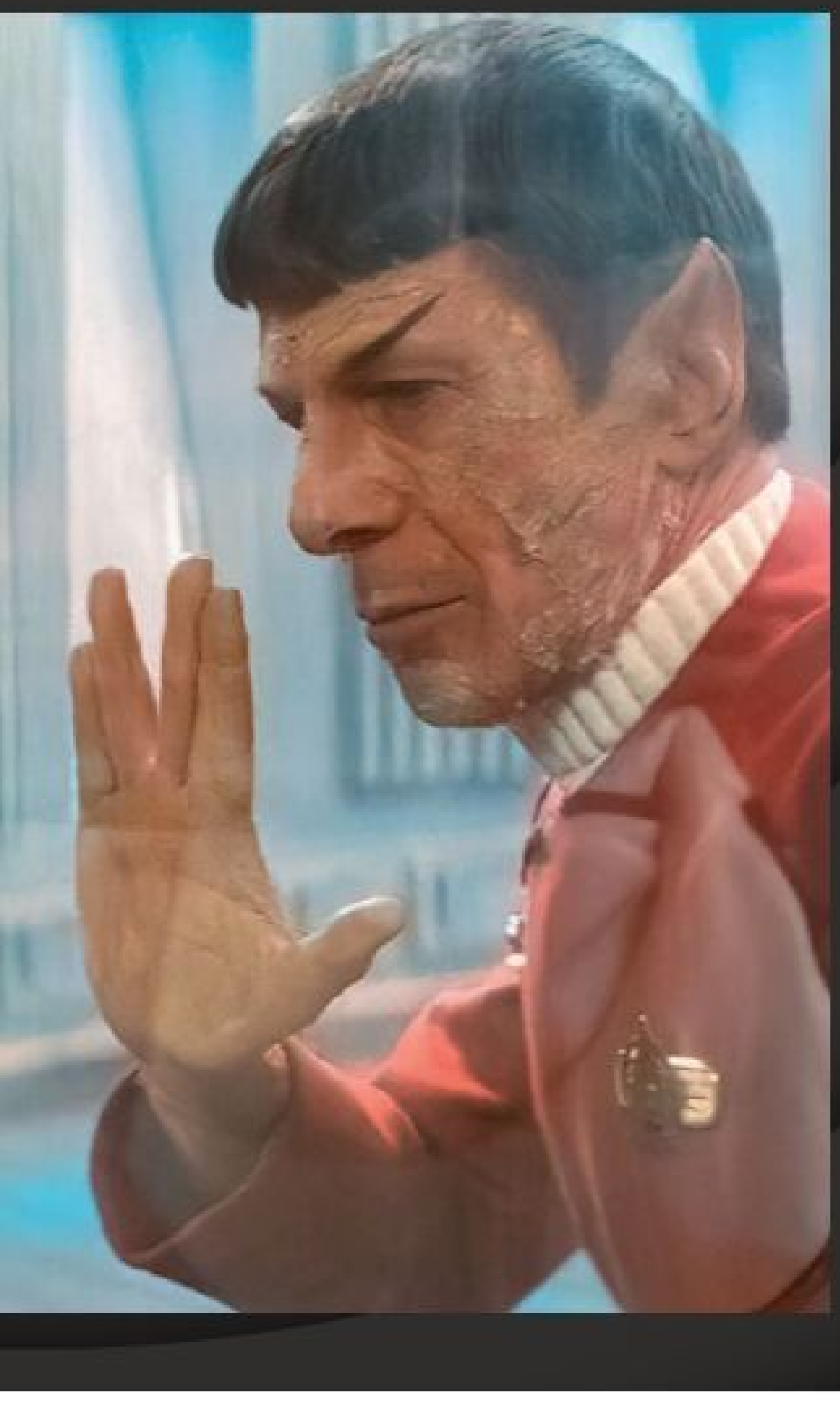
Carrie 1976

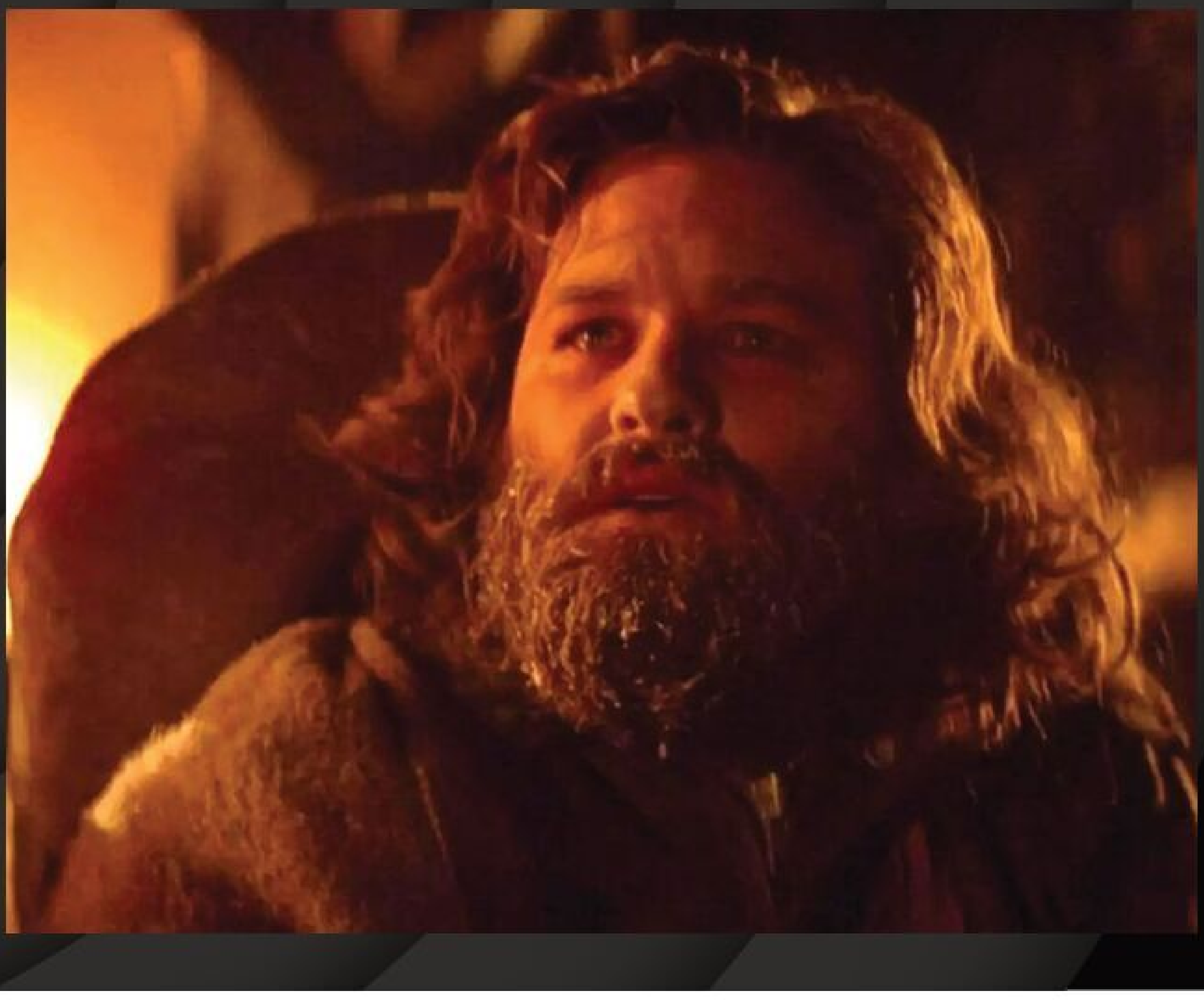
The high-school prom has ended in disaster and Carrie White has literally brought the house down, burning herself and her domineering mother to death in the process. It feels like the drama in Brian De Palma's classic Stephen King adaptation is all done and dusted when we cut to a soft-lit sequence where sole survivor Sue Snell walks through a graveyard to lay flowers on Carrie's grave.

Then Carrie's hand unexpectedly shoots out of the ground, grabbing Sue who wakes up screaming. Shock codas are now the norm in horror movies, but it was Carrie's hand that drew the heart-stopping blueprint.

Invasion Of The Body Snatchers 1978

Hollywood has revisited the sci-fi tale of humanity being replaced with sinister,





emotionless pod people on numerous occasions, but Philip Kaufman's 1978 vintage is the best of the bunch, the product of the era of classic paranoid political thrillers and closing with a brilliant piece of misdirection. Having just been seen lighting a warehouse fire that destroyed thousands of pods – in what would usually be the movie's climactic scene – we next see hero Matthew Bennell going about his business in San Francisco, blending in with the mindless invaders. Then fellow survivor Nancy Bellicec spots him in the crowd and calls out to him.

As Matthew lets out a bloodcurdling shriek (we won't attempt to transcribe the sound here), he simultaneously reveals himself as a pod person and gives birth to an internet meme. It doesn't look like humanity's coming back from this one…

Raiders Of The Lost Ark 1981

The Nazis have been defeated, the Ark of the Covenant has been recovered, and all should be right with Indiana Jones and Marion Ravenwood. It turns out, though, that there's one enemy cinema's coolest archaeologist can't defeat – government bureaucrats. While Indy and his old chum Marcus Brody were expecting the Ark – "a source of unspeakable power," don't forget – to find its way into a museum for research, the stonewalling government officials tell them that unnamed "top men" are taking care of it.

It's all political bluster, of course, as the next time we see the Ark it's being sealed in a wooden crate, hidden away in a giant warehouse for what's likely to be all time – at the very least it's still there two decades later, as revealed during the Area 51 chase at the start of *Crystal Skull*. An intentionally anticlimactic climax that adds to the mystique of *Raiders*, one of the greatest action movies of all time.

Star Trek II: The Wrath Of Khan 1982

The best *Star Trek* film gets the franchise's best ending, as the "no-win scenario" that's been a theme throughout plays out in the most powerful way imaginable. The vengeful Khan may have been defeated by the Enterprise crew but he leaves a lethal parting gift by detonating the Genesis device. With escape seemingly impossible for a critically damaged Enterprise, Spock follows the maxim that "the needs of the many outweigh the needs of the few… or the one", and sacrifices himself to save the ship.

For a Trekkie audience used to seeing their heroes survive anything the galaxy threw at them, it was one hell of a shock – and Leonard Nimoy and William Shatner make their final scene together (until *The Search For Spock*, at least) incredibly moving. "I have been and always shall be your friend. Live long and prosper."

The Thing 1982

In one of the most remote places on Earth, two men contemplate their fate – though one of them is probably not human… With the remains of their Antarctic research station smouldering behind them, sole survivors MacReady and Childs chew the fat. They know that one of them is the lethal shape-shifting alien that's killed everyone else in the base – and that as soon as they freeze, the monster will have a chance to infect the rest of the planet. "What do we do?" asks Childs. "Why don't we just wait here for a little while, see what happens," replies MacReady in a wonderfully ambiguous finale that stays with you long after the credits have rolled.

Back To The Future Part II 1989

"Where we're going we don't need… roads."

Nobody can say that Doc Brown didn't warn us that the sequel to *Back To The Future* was going to break all the rules, with its split timelines, return to 1955 and bonkers ending. With the Doc and the time machine seemingly vaporised by a lightning strike, a Western Union delivery guy appears out of the rain carrying a letter they've had in their possession since 1885, addressed to one Marty McFly. "There's only one man who can help me," says Marty as he sprints back to Hill Valley town centre, where the 1955 Doc Brown has just sent Marty's previous self back to the future. Messing around in the previous movie's timeline is an audacious move that pays off spectacularly. And because *Part II* and *Part III* were shot back to back, cinemagoers even got a sneak peek at Marty's adventures in the Old West…

The Silence Of The Lambs 1991

In the movie world at least, Dr. Hannibal "the Cannibal" Lecter became something of a pantomime villain with *Hannibal* and *Red Dragon*. In *The Silence Of The Lambs*, however, the Oscar-winning Anthony Hopkins portrays him as genuinely chilling and extremely dangerous. It's a good job, too, because without such a powerhouse performance at the centre of the horror movie, the final scene – where the at-large Dr. Lecter makes a phone call to rookie FBI agent Clarice Starling, to ask if her metaphorical lambs have stopped screaming – would have been cheesy as hell. "I do wish we could chat longer, but… I'm having an old friend for dinner," he signs off as his psychiatrist nemesis Dr. Chilton gets off a plane – a little hammy, but perfect to sink your teeth into.

Thelma & Louise 1991

When it comes to iconic blaze-of-glory freeze frames, *Butch Cassidy And The Sundance Kid* got there first, but Ridley Scott's classic road movie did it better. With eponymous fugitives cornered by the authorities on the edge of the Grand Canyon, the duo agree to not get caught and keep going. Holding Thelma's hand, Louise puts her foot on the accelerator of their vintage Ford Thunderbird, and the car flies off the cliff edge in glorious slow-motion, before the picture freezes, immortalising two characters in their most iconic moment. Optimistic, tear-jerking… one of the greats.

The Shawshank Redemption 1994

The final scene of the classic prison drama – where Red reunites with his friend Andy on a Mexican beach – wasn't in writer/director Frank Darabont's original script. Like the Stephen King short story that inspired the movie, the film was supposed to end more ambiguously with Red on a bus, hoping to find his friend. But, proving that movie studios do sometimes know what they're talking about, they suggested that after more than two hours of hell in Shawshank prison, the audience would need the catharsis of a reunion – and Darabont eventually agreed with them. It's a perfect, wordless finale – subtle but utterly uplifting.

The Usual Suspects 1995

For some movies, the ending is simply a bookend; a way to wrap things up – if you removed it, it wouldn't make much difference to what came before. In the case of *The Usual Suspects*, however, the final scenes are the foundation on which the whole house of cards is built – if the filmmakers hadn't nailed the closing sequence, it wouldn't have become a classic piece of '90s cinema.

Christopher McQuarrie's script is a masterclass in structure from start to finish, but the final sequence, where Agent Dave Kujan realises that Verbal Kint was Big Bad Keyser Söze the entire time, is one of cinema's most audacious twists. If the greatest trick the devil ever pulled was convincing the world he didn't exist, his second was engineering one of the best movie endings in history.

Se7en 1995

Like *The Usual Suspects*, David Fincher's first movie proper (he effectively disowned his debut, *Alien 3*) is an ingeniously assembled puzzle box whose entire structure is built around its conclusion (and, um, features Kevin Spacey). Serial killer John Doe is in custody and has seemingly been stopped before he has a chance to complete the last two murders of his Seven Deadly Sins-inspired killing spree. But it turns out he's planned ahead – with brutal consequences. He's arranged for a FedEx box to be delivered to Somerset and Mills. Although we never actually see inside, it apparently contains the severed head of Mills' wife, Tracy. That's Envy ticked off, leaving Mills to become Wrath by shooting John Doe, and completing the grandest of grand plans. Uncompromisingly brilliant.

The Sixth Sense 1999

If there was no twist in *The Sixth Sense*, would the film still exist? Director M. Night Shyamalan's subsequent career choices made sure he was pigeonholed as The Twist Guy, but never has he bettered the shock conclusion of this creepy ghost story. Some viewers twigged early on that psychiatrist Malcolm Crowe had died from the gunshot wound inflicted by one of his former patients, but the rest of us had to wait until the very end to find out he was one of the dead people clairvoyant kid Cole Sear sees "all the time". It's one of the best movie endings of all time because it completely changes everything you think you know about the story – and arms you with knowledge that makes the next rewatch very, very different.

Memento 2000

Technically speaking, Christopher Nolan's calling-card thriller shouldn't really be on a list of the best movie endings at all, seeing as the tricksy backwards structure means the end is actually the beginning of the story, but it is a genuine original. Up to the final scenes, *Memento*'s focus is on Leonard Shelby, an amnesiac who can't make new memories, and uses tattoos and Polaroids as reminders in his quest to find his wife's murderer.

The big twist is that Shelby's mission has been going on for some time (despite the fact his wife's death appears to have been more medical accident than murder), and that he's created the backstory of the elusive "John G" to give his life purpose – instantly explaining why Teddy (seemingly Leonard's closest friend) was shot at the beginning. Or should that be the end?

Toy Story 3 2010

Despite a fourth instalment and spin-off *Lightyear* arriving years later, *Toy Story 3* felt like the perfect full stop to Woody and Buzz Lightyear's adventures in Andy's bedroom. The moment the toys face their impending deaths in an incinerator is emotionally draining enough, but it's nothing compared to a closing scene where Andy, before leaving for college, hands his toys over to sprightly tot Bonnie, starting a whole new chapter in their lives. It's a beautiful way to end a trilogy, simultaneously happy and sad – and even if the fourth instalment had never existed we'd have been happy and emotionally satisfied.

Star Wars: The Force Awakens 2015

We could easily have included *The Empire Strikes Back* in this list of the best movie endings, but to call *Star Wars: Episode V*'s epic final act a mere ending is doing it a disservice. Nearly half an hour of brilliance (a quarter of the movie!) unfolds between Han Solo being turned into a carbonite decoration and the final credits – not even that famous parental revelation really counts as a denouement, because there's still so much left to play out.

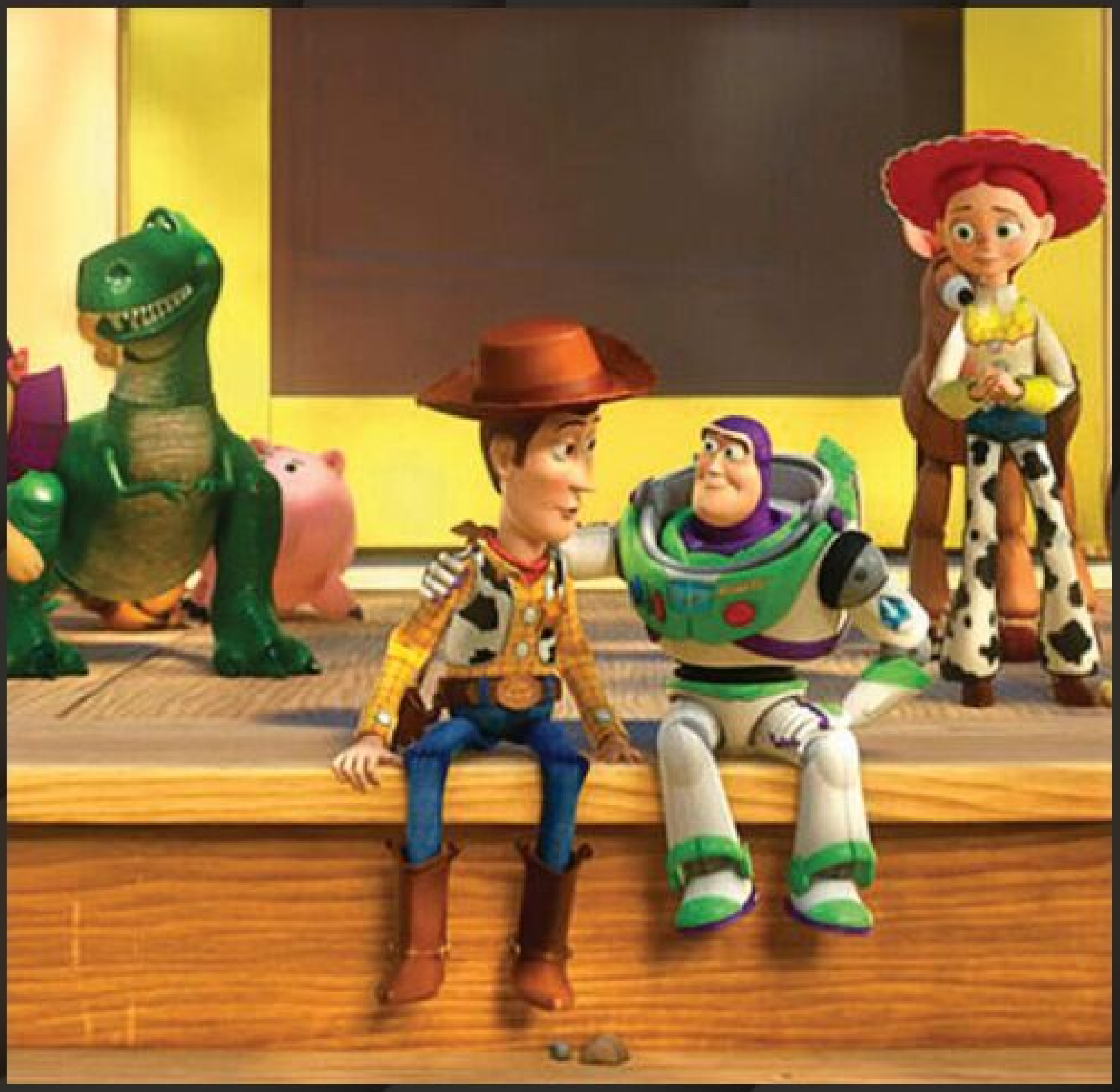
The Force Awakens closes perfectly, however, as Rey finally meets the man we've been waiting an entire movie – and the previous 32 years – to see on screen. That final shot of Luke Skywalker on the remote planet of Ahch-To, wearing an entirely ambiguous expression, instantly became one of the most iconic in *Star Wars* history – and made sure we were desperate to come back two years later for *The Last Jedi*.

Avengers: Infinity War 2018

The close of *Avengers: Infinity War* isn't really an ending at all – freed from the need to wrap up any storylines, it's simply a curtain-raiser for *Avengers: Endgame* and the ultimate cliffhanger – unashamedly so, in fact.

With Thanos' famous finger snap turning half the beings in the universe to dust – including big-name superheroes like Spider-Man, Black Panther and Star-Lord – there's no question that the Mad Titan has won the battle. We had to wait a whole year to find out how (or, indeed, if) the original Avengers were going to win the war. Fair play to Marvel for keeping us guessing all the way until *Endgame*. Which, as it goes, would also be a contender for any collection of the best movie endings, too…

KOBAYASHI
Porcelain



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The Judd Apatow-produced **BROS** is the first gay romantic comedy by a major studio. It's important and funny AF – the best romcom for years. Total Film talks to writer-star Billy Eichner, co-star Luke Macfarlane and director Nicholas Stoller about bantz, butt-pics and making big-time history.

WORDS: JAMIE GRAHAM

Prejudice

There's a scene in romantic comedy *Bros* in which lead character Bobby is looking to hook up with a guy on a dating app but the guy won't commit until Bobby's sent through a butt pic (Tom Hanks and Meg Ryan never had to worry about this stuff). Panicked, Bobby scurries to the bathroom to shave his ass. But hurried and horny, he nicks it with the razor. "What am I meant to do now?" he wails. "I can't shit, I can't fuck." The above should put to bed any worries that a major studio making a gay romcom will mean it's heavily sanitised for mainstream audiences. And if that doesn't alarm Middle America, wait until Bobby states, "Jesus was gay."

"Universal was very trusting in the process," says director and co-writer Nicholas Stoller. "Their notes tend to be macro notes: 'The ending isn't good enough' or 'This character's arc isn't clear enough.' When it comes to jokes and set-pieces, they just trust us. And honestly, the test audience would tell us if something went too far. And usually a test audience reacts because something starts to feel false. It's never like, 'Oh, that's too much.'" Stoller grins. "So the butt-shaving thing… Everyone has felt insecure; everyone has felt vulnerable; everyone has felt like they don't look good. Even if you've never shaved your ass, everyone's had a version of that. So no one blinked. Everyone thought it was hilarious."

Stoller's co-writer, Billy Eichner, who plays the above-mentioned Bobby, was shocked by the lack of notes. "I kept waiting," he says. "I mean, I've been openly gay in comedy and in Hollywood since the beginning of my career – I didn't come out to write a memoir or be on the cover of *People* magazine – so I kept waiting because I'm so conditioned to that being an obstacle. But to the credit of everyone at Universal, I never heard, one time, 'This is too gay, this is too explicit, this is going to scare straight people.' Now, I don't know what internal conversations they had among themselves. And maybe they were just smart enough to know in our current culture they should not say that to me, and they should just make peace with that on their own. I don't know. I wasn't privy to all those conversations. But I never got a note, or even a suggestion, that we were taking things too far, or we were keeping things too real."

In fact, Eichner, who created reality game show *Billy On The Street* and voiced Timon in the 2019 remake of *The Lion King*, never thought that Universal or any other studio would consider making *Bros* in the first place. It was Stoller, who's straight, who came to him with the idea of "a romantic comedy centred around a gay couple". Eichner, openly gay in the industry for 20 years, considered it the pie-in-the-sky plan of an "entitled straight man".

Bobby (Billy Eichner) and Aaron (Luke Macfarlane) both suffer with insecurities – for different reasons.

> 'To the credit of everyone at Universal, I never heard, one time, "This is too gay"'
>
> BILLY EICHNER

"I kept telling him that it was going to have to be done as an indie movie or a streaming film," says Eichner. "I just did not believe a major studio would do it." He had first-hand experience. "It's interesting, when I was younger and naive about homophobia in Hollywood, I had this dream where I could be the Tom Hanks or the Billy Crystal. The movies I returned to again and again were *Moonstruck* and *When Harry Met Sally…* and *Broadcast News* and *Working Girl* – these great studio romantic comedies. But when I was starting out in comedy, it became very apparent that being openly gay was going to be a real obstacle. Basically I was told I should do my best to play the wacky, two-dimensional, gay neighbour on a sitcom. That's what the ceiling would be."

Stoller had form with Universal: *Forgetting Sarah Marshall*, *Get Him To The Greek*, *The Five-Year Engagement*, *Bad Neighbours* and *Bad Neighbours 2*. And so did Judd Apatow, who came on board as a producer: *The 40-Year-Old Virgin*, *Knocked Up*, *Funny People*, *This Is 40*, *Trainwreck*, *The King Of Staten Island*. But still Eichner said it wouldn't, couldn't, happen.

"I had been told for years by execs and agents and managers and even people who really supported me: 'Your stuff is too gay.' Sometimes they would use all this coded language to say it, but I knew what they meant.

Stoller and Macfarlane working on set.

'You're too smart. You're too sophisticated. You're too New York.' I was like, 'You can be too smart? I didn't know there was such a thing! Oh, I know what you mean – I'm gay.'"

But then came the pitch meeting, with Stoller and Apatow also in the room as Eichner acted out the entire film to head honchos Donna Langley, Erik Baiers and Peter Cramer. "And Universal pretty much bought it in the room," says Eichner, still looking like he can't quite believe it. "They called me later that day and said, 'There's three times a year all the executives agree that they should buy a movie, and that is one of them.'"

TRUE ROMANCE

Eichner's Bobby is at the centre of *Bros*. A neurotic gay man living in New York, he's dabbled in writing children's books, failed an audition for *Queer Eye*, and proved unable to pen a gay romcom because he vehemently disagrees with the studio that gay and straight relationships are the same: "Love is love is love," insists an exec, to Bobby's disgust. Now overseeing an LGBTQ+ museum of history and culture, he's intent on curating an exhibition celebrating Abraham Lincoln as the first gay president, and is about to receive a Cis Gay White Man of the Year award.

One of Bobby's friends is hooking up with a ripped, hirsute 65-year-old ("It's like they injected steroids into Dumbledore") and a couple he knows have just invited a third guy into a 'thrupple'. But Bobby is determinedly single, so it throws him for a loop when he meets Aaron (Luke Macfarlane) at a club. The pair are instantly drawn to each other. But they are also fearful and insecure: Bobby feels that hunky, sporty Aaron is physically out of his league; Aaron worries he can't compete in the intellect and culture stakes.

Macfarlane won the part of Aaron in auditions for Eichner, Stoller and Apatow. "I read the script, and immediately went, 'I really like this movie,'" he says. "I'd been getting texts from various friends of mine in the business, specifically other gay men, and they said, 'Luke, I think this part is perfect for you.' I went in and auditioned and I actually had one of those rare experiences where I was like, 'Oh, that went really well.'"

Having grown up in a "smallish town in Canada where the Abercrombie vibe is intense", Macfarlane, who came out in his first year at Juilliard, identified with Aaron. "I'm an openly gay guy, and there's something about being a gay man of my age," he says. "We had a specific experience. You know, we grew up before marriage equality. We grew up where the only gay stuff you could really get would be Chippendales dancers on [The Phil] *Donahue* [Show]. So we had these very strange… you know, Mark Wahlberg doing Calvin Klein ads created this very specific sense of what masculinity and sexual desire was for gay men. I immediately understood that,

and that Billy was speaking about that."

"Billy wrote this character, and he was like, 'He's a bro-y guy,'" says Stoller. "He was explaining him to me. I was like, 'I don't understand.' He was explaining and explaining and explaining it. And then we started our auditions. Luke walked in, and I got it instantly. I was like, 'Oh, this is hilarious.'"

Eichner and Macfarlane had never met before – most openly gay actors know each other, says Eichner – and this 'working each other out' dynamic was perfect for the characters. But it also meant they had to shoot a sex scene as virtual strangers. The foreplay is awkward, romantic and funny. It's also a powerplay. The scene is quite unlike anything you'll see in a straight romcom.

"It's one of the funniest scenes," grins Eichner. "When we screened the movie, half the audience, at least, was straight, and everyone found the scene explosively funny. And I think there's some shock value in it, which is great. Because that's part of what makes the movie new and exciting."

An intimacy coach was employed to map out the sex scenes, but Eichner and Macfarlane soon found themselves going off-road. "You know, I've done sex scenes before with women [*Macfarlane has been the lead in several straight romcoms on the Hallmark Channel*], and they've always been much less wild, much less animalistic. I've never done a sex scene quite like *this*. We did have an intimacy coach, but it all goes out the window as soon as you start going."

> "I feel very proud that we're doing this. But on the other hand: why did it take so long?'
>
> NICHOLAS STOLLER

The scene has "an undertone of aggression and dominance", Macfarlane points out, which ties in with the theme of the relationship throughout the movie, as Bobby and Aaron tussle for trust and intimacy. But it could have been a lot more extreme. "There was a moment when we were like, 'Do we experiment with spitting on each other?' And I was like, 'No, I don't want to do that.' But it was an obvious conversation given the aggressive, territorial nature." Now *that* might have tested Universal's policy to not interfere with the gags and set-pieces…

Nicholas Stoller directs a stellar cast of LGBTQ+ talent.

COMEDY GOLD

Much as Universal should be applauded for making the first gay studio romcom, and allowing Eichner to be honest about his experience, it would not have happened had it not made commercial sense. Hollywood is, first and foremost, a business, and Bobby jokes in the movie about how LGBTQ+ films are now viable because audiences are "10 per cent less homophobic". Ten years ago, *Bros*, on this scale, would not have been greenlit. Now it could, *should*, be a hit, walking as it does a fine line between being a traditional, crowd-pleasing romcom with recognisable beats and tropes, and something strikingly new.

"To actually get people to leave their house, and to look away from Instagram and TikTok, you have to give them a new experience," insists Eichner. "On some level, *Bros* has all the elements of a classic romantic comedy that

Leads Eichner and Macfarlane display an easy and instant chemistry.

people have grown to love over decades. But it's a very new and exciting experience. I think it's really unlike anything a lot of people have ever seen. And that's what makes it an event."

Eichner describes *Bros* as "*The 40-Year-Old Virgin* but about a nerdy, neurotic gay guy, and not a nerdy, neurotic Steve Carell", and then as "*Bridesmaids* that happens to star LGBTQ folks". This last is important. For while it's directed by a straight man ("I'm telling Billy's story the way I told Jason Segel's story in *Sarah Marshall*, because this is kind of what I'm good at," says Stoller), *Bros* stars an entirely LGBTQ+ cast, even in the straight roles.

Eichner takes a breath. "There are any number of examples of straight actors giving a remarkable, wonderful performance playing a member of the LGBTQ community," he starts. "But there's a lack of equity, right? Because it never seems to work in the reverse. You look at the history of Hollywood, and nearly every great LGBTQ role in a mainstream film that got a lot of attention and awards is played by a straight actor who's looking to use those roles to show people their range, and how brave they are, and they're a serious actor. We've been denied all of those opportunities. We're trying to restore a historic and very glaringly obvious imbalance here, where LGBTQ folks are not cast to play their own roles, and certainly hardly ever cast to play the great straight roles. We have a really big ensemble in the movie – actors from across generations, from all different corners of the community – but honestly, we could have cast the movie several times over, because there were so many hilarious, talented people we saw."

Hilarious is the watchword, for *Bros* is a raucous, rib-tickling night out. But beneath the layers of wild entertainment is real importance, real history. "My favourite director is Billy Wilder, and he has a famous quote of: 'You have a piece of cake around a bitter pill,'" says Stoller. "I did a little bit of an LGBTQ cinema history tour before I shot the movie. There's a movie called *Trick* from the '90s – a comedy made by gay people – that's the closest thing to this movie. There's nothing else. Which is crazy. So on the one hand, I feel very proud that we're doing this. But on the other hand, I'm like: why did it take so long? This is insane. Hopefully this is the first of many."

"I guess it's weird to say it about my own work, but I do feel it's a great moment," nods Eichner when asked about the significance of *Bros*. "I'm really proud of it. I think we've done a great job. We'll see what the public has to say, and what the critics have to say. But Nick and I never sat down and said, 'Let's write a historic movie.' We just said, 'Let's write the funniest fucking movie we can write, where there are big laughs in every scene.' And we wanted it to be sweet and honest and poignant. I hope that everyone – gay people, of course, and straight people – rallies around it, because they're going to have a great time and we need to get more movies like this."

Eichner smiles. "You know, gay people have been going to see romcoms with straight people in for as long as Hollywood has existed. I'm hoping straight folks will return the favour."

BROS OPENS IN CINEMAS ON 28 OCTOBER.

Q&A

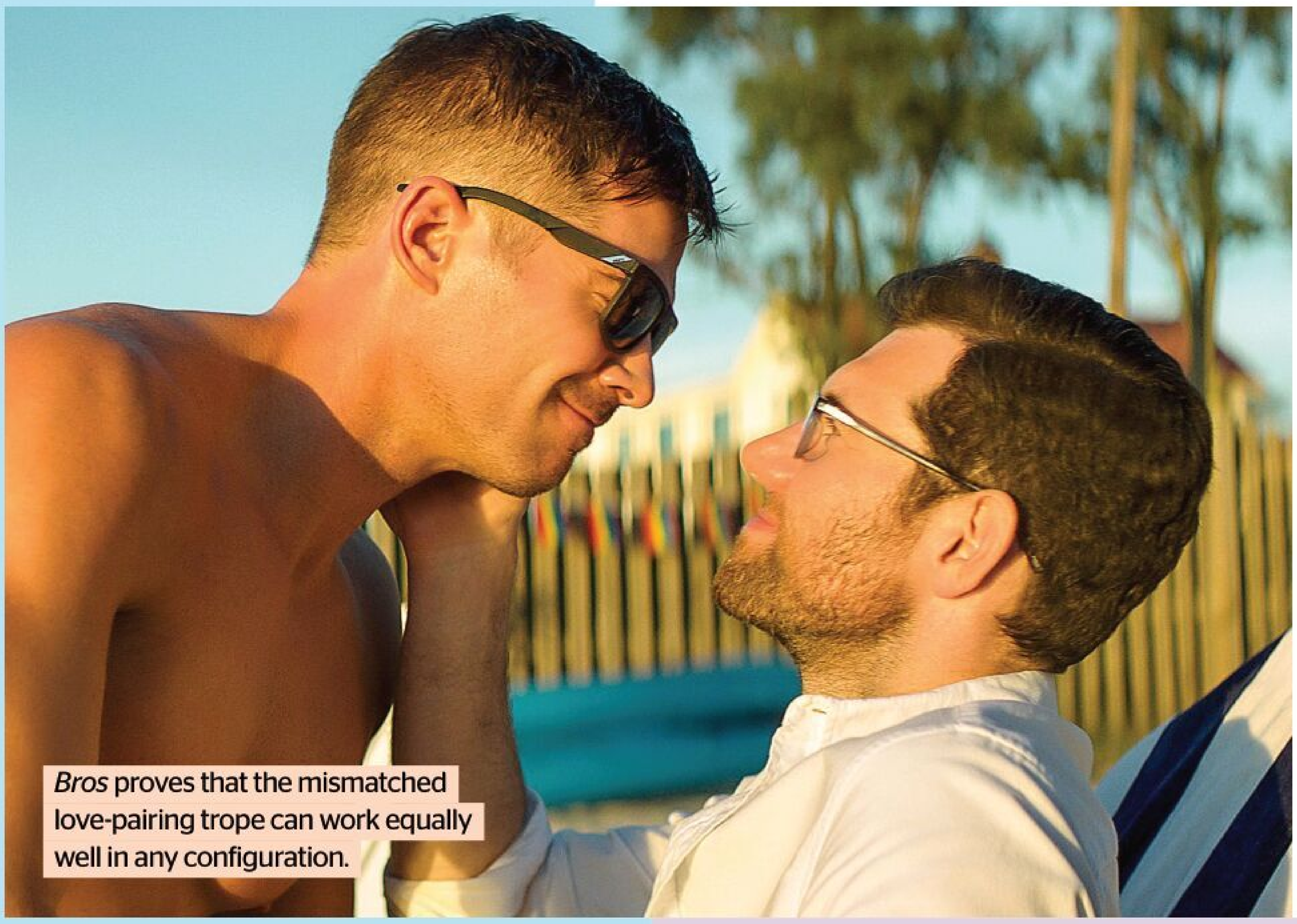
Boyfriend material

Co-star **Luke Macfarlane** on making history, playing the straight man and staying ripped...

Did you feel a weight of significance when making *Bros*?
There was certainly a real hope that it would be good enough to be the placeholder for the beginning of what is hopefully many more romantic comedies in the genre. We just wanted it to be really good. There was a lot of anxiety around that.

You've done straight romcoms on the Hallmark Channel. Movies like *Just Add Romance* and *The Mistletoe Promise*...
Yes, I've done many romantic comedies in my career. It's so funny, I never would have known that I would become sort of the Prince Charming for the Hallmark Channel. It's such a bizarre cultural thing. We always know what's going to happen in those movies. And that's part of the appeal. You need to let people know they're going to have one dry kiss, and then it's done.

Your character, Aaron, is in fantastic shape. Did you have to hit the gym?
Well, I sure did have to work out for the role. I mean, I'm an athlete, but for a studio picture you want to take it to the next level. And I enjoy that. Any level of transformation physically is a good way to try to get into a character. We were ready to shoot in March, I was in the best shape of my life, and then Covid happened. All the gyms closed. So it became a year of backyard exercising and a strict diet to hold onto the goal posts. It was a lot of work! **JAMIE GRAHAM**



Bros proves that the mismatched love-pairing trope can work equally well in any configuration.

Educating Emma

She exploded onto the scene with Sex Education, and is breaking the biopic mould as the middle Brontë sister in **EMILY**, but Emma Mackey is still hungry for new experiences. Here, she tells Total Film about life lessons, Barbie, and what she's learned from working with Margot Robbie.

WORDS MATT MAYTUM **PORTRAIT** RANKIN

Overnight stardom' is, like all clichés, egregiously overused. But it's undeniably apt for Emma Mackey, coinciding with all eight episodes of *Sex Education* Season 1 dropping on Netflix on 11 January 2019. The show was an enormous hit, and Mackey – as Maeve Wiley, the feisty, street-smart high-schooler who helps Otis (Asa Butterfield) establish a sex-therapy clinic for their fellow students in need – instantly became a star.

A standout among a cast destined to dominate screens for years, Mackey had attitude, acting chops, and screen presence to spare. This was, somewhat unbelievably, her first professional acting role (she'd dabbled with drama while studying English Language and Literature at the University of Leeds). She's since starred in a further two seasons, and when *Total Film* catches up with her via Zoom in August, she's *just* about to start shooting the fourth. While that show has been keeping her busy, her film career is also off to an enviable start, and her highest-profile lead role to date arrives in cinemas shortly. *Emily* sees Mackey star as the middle Brontë sister and *Wuthering Heights* author, who published that industry-shaking classic aged just 29.

A keen reader who'd studied in the north of England, Mackey would seem like an ideal fit for this particular literary icon. "I had an interest in literature and female literary characters – Emily Brontë and the Brontës generally were figureheads of that," explains Mackey, dressed casually in a plain white vest and a delicate white necklace. "So I was interested. But I wasn't a die-hard Brontë-head. I'd just read the books, and had read [*Charlotte Brontë's*] *Jane Eyre*, and had read *Wuthering Heights* and all of these.

RANKIN / TRUNK ARCHIVE

➳ I enjoyed them. I think I was also more intrigued because I didn't really know anything about their lives per se. And any documentary and any costume drama, I will watch immediately."

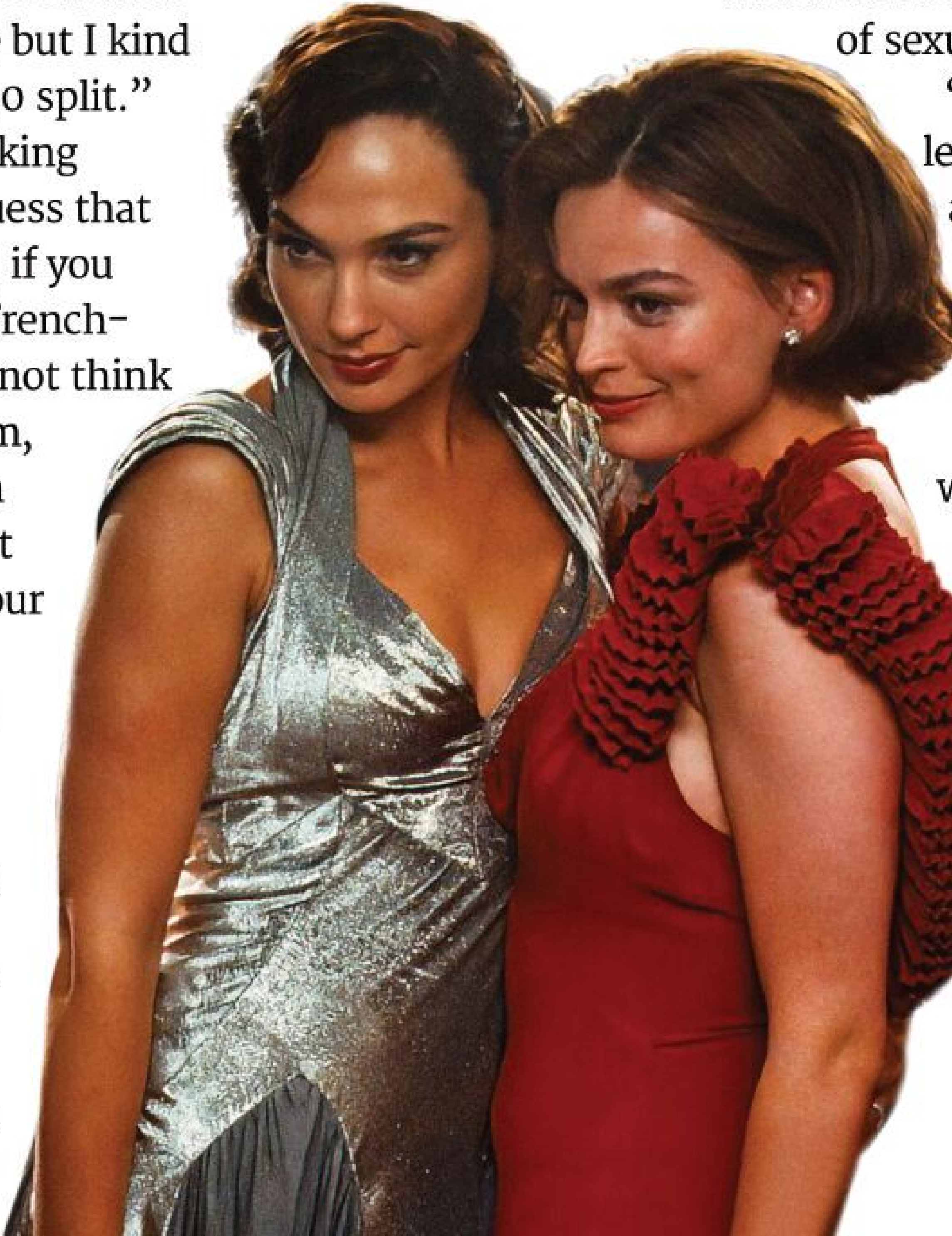
Emily isn't your typical biopic: debut writer/director Frances O'Connor (best known as an actor in *Mansfield Park* and *A.I. Artificial Intelligence*) claims she doesn't even see it as such. Despite the success of her only novel, Emily Brontë's life story isn't all that well known, leaving O'Connor and Mackey plenty of gaps to shade in. "I realised as I was getting deeper and deeper that I was getting too attached to the factual elements," says Mackey of her research. "And then Frances had to pull me out of that world, and was like, 'You need to come back!'"

It's an earthy, organic, naturalistic film, weaving in gothic elements, *Wuthering Heights* vibes, and aspects that speak to O'Connor's own reflections on female authenticity in the modern age. Crucial to the film is the fact/fiction-blurring forbidden romance that she falls into with visiting clergyman William Weightman (Oliver Jackson-Cohen), who's roped into giving her French lessons (not like that… well, actually, sort of like that as well).

FRENCH LESSONS

The speaking of fluent French is one aspect of the role that wouldn't have required any prep on 26-year-old Mackey's part: perhaps surprisingly, for anyone who only knows her work from *Sex Education*, Mackey actually grew up in France, and has dual British-French citizenship, having been born to an English mother and French father. Now, she splits her time between the two countries.

"It's half/half at the moment," she explains. "I'm mostly over there because that's where I live but I kind of work here. So it's a 50/50 split." Based on her English speaking and accent, you'd never guess that she was French (although, if you had only seen her recent French-language film *Eiffel*, you'd not think she was British). "My mum, specifically, was very stern in that we spoke English at home, because obviously our schooling was in French, and we spoke French with our dad and our friends. So at home, it was a very British bubble. I read a lot, and I loved reading. So that was also due to that."



She's happy for her nationality to fly under the radar, though. "I like that people don't know that I'm French," she laughs. "I think it's quite good if they don't know."

Another aspect of *Emily* that she was well equipped for was the sex scenes, having cut her teeth on the most frank and sex-positive show of its era (as much for its discussion of all aspects of sexuality as its depiction).

"We spoke about it at length," explains Mackey on approaching those scenes in *Emily* with director O'Connor and co-star Jackson-Cohen. "Oli is a friend as well, so there was already a trust there. It wasn't a complete stranger. It's quite rare, I think, to have that, and to be able to talk about it. And Frances was very helpful in that regard. She knew kind of what she wanted, but it was down to us to talk about it, and figure out the beats. And because of my *Sex Education* past, I'm very good at doing that!"

She does add that *Sex Education* laid a "great groundwork" for having those discussions on future projects. "You have the groundwork and the foundation of that teaching, of that learning, of the elements and the carving out of the beats, and the tempo, and figuring out how to choreograph a sex scene… It's nice to have that to fall back on."

Thinking back to landing the career-supercharging, life-changing role of Maeve, Mackey's memory is hazy. "I had no idea [*how it was going to turn out*]," she explains, "and I'm glad it came out the way it did. I think it's been really phenomenal how much of an impact it's had on people. It makes me very proud to be a part of it. You don't have to be a fan of the show to understand that it's doing good. I think it's reassuring people. I like that."

The fourth season of the show will pick up with Maeve undertaking her scholarship at an Ivy League college

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Out on the wily, windy moors: Emma Mackey giving it a bit of the old *Wuthering Heights* in *Emma*.

Gone to Schitt: Dan Levy joins the cast of *Sex Education* in Season 4.

in the US, an opportunity she was granted just as her will-they-won't-they relationship with Otis seemed to be settling on the 'they will' side of the pendulum. Shortly after our chat, it's announced that Dan Levy (*Schitt's Creek*) has joined the cast as her tutor.

Whatever the future holds for Maeve, Mackey's trajectory shows no signs of dipping. Of her few movie credits so far, one involved stealing *Death On The Nile* out from underneath her A-list cast mates. She speaks effusively about the situation, but admits, "I didn't really get to celebrate the film in the way that I would have liked because of various situations – but also because of Covid, and all of that. I think *Emily* is the first time I'm going to be able to go to a proper film festival with a film. I haven't really done that yet. I'm excited to see what it's all about."

When it comes to excitement on the horizon, Mackey also has a role in *Barbie*, the hotly anticipated live-action film for the Mattel icon, starring Margot Robbie and directed by Greta Gerwig. When *Sex Education* debuted, Mackey was considered something of a lookalike for Robbie, probably in large part because of the Harley Quinn-esque pink-and-blond hair and heavy eye shadow that Maeve sported in the first season (today Mackey looks fresh-faced with shoulder-length brown hair). When asked if those comparisons were flattering or frustrating, Mackey laughs it off.

"It's just funny," she says. "And I think Margot has had the grace and humour to be able to play on that, and allow me to be in the same film as her – bless her. It's just a joke in real life. I'm like, 'We don't look anything like each other.' I don't mind it. It's Margot Robbie. Are you kidding me? She's the best. I look up to her so much. I don't mind the comparisons. But it would be nice to move past that."

It's unlikely that people will be moving past it just yet, at least not until *Barbie* lands. "My dream was to work with Greta. When that came along, I was like, 'I need to audition for this.' I was really excited because Greta's my hero, and I adore her. Working with her has been everything I could have dreamed of."

Mackey's restricted in terms of what she can say about the film for now, but her enthusiasm is palpable. "It's pretty special," she beams. "It's one of the best scripts all of us had read." As for the tone of the film, Mackey says, "It's very unexpected in many ways. I think people are going to have an idea of the film, and I don't think it's going to be that. It's going to be a surprise. I'm really excited. And it's a comedy, thank God. No crying in this film! Let me tell you that. No crying! It was great to do pure comedy – an American comedy, as well. And I got to work with some heroes."

Mackey has spoken before about wanting to move into producing and directing, so she could do a lot worse than learning from Robbie – one of the most pro-active producer/stars in the business. "Margot and Greta, they're very good mentors, and very into transitions. There's no hierarchy. There's no, 'This is you, this is my dance space.' [*Robbie*] set such a good example in specifically how to be a producer, and also play Barbie in the film *Barbie*, and also be a full-time producer on other projects. It's really quite incredible what she does. She's a great inspiration."

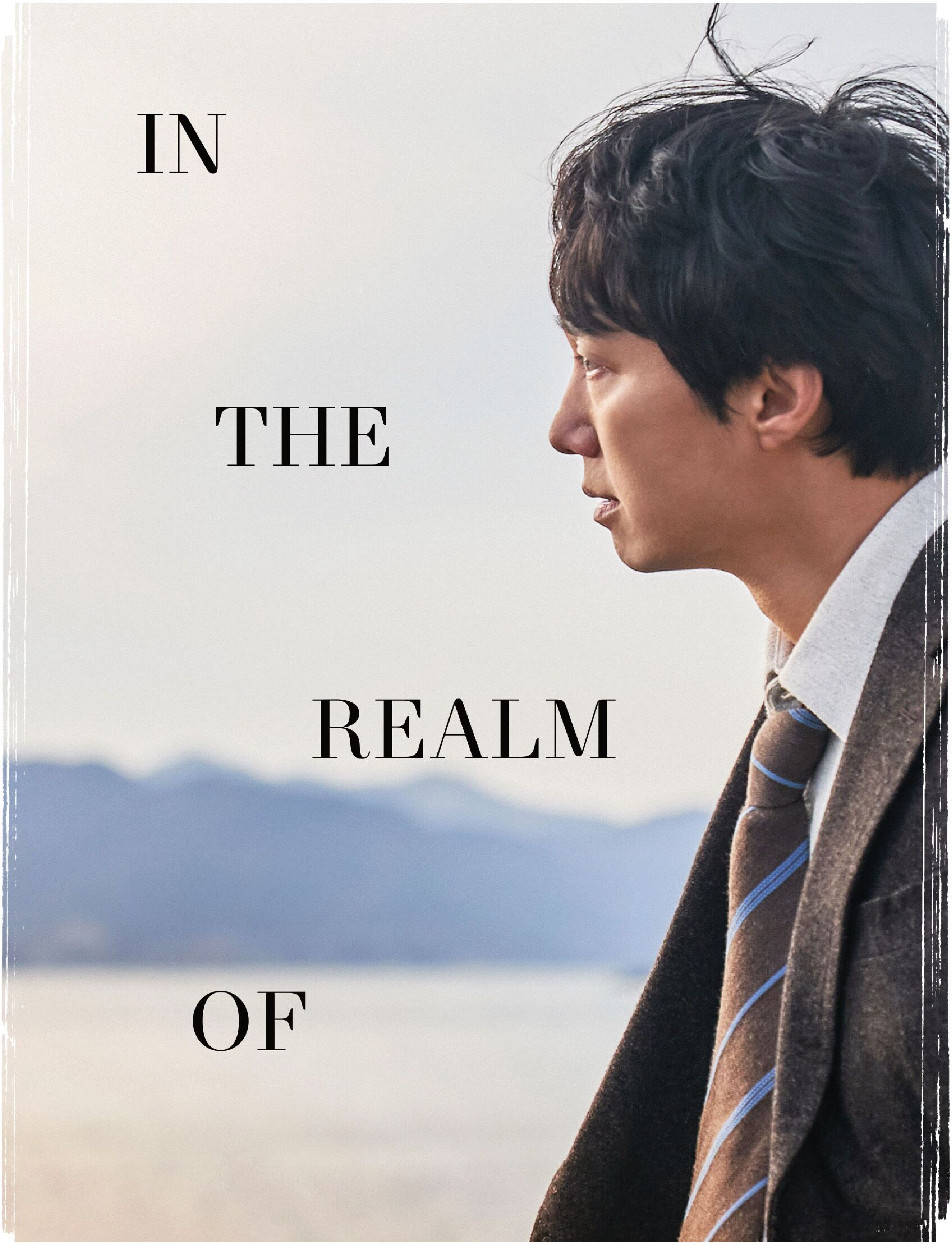
'I'M NOT PRECIOUS. I WANT TO TRY EVERYTHING'

The idea of developing material and/or directing has been with Mackey for a while now. "Those are things I've always toyed with," she muses. "I don't know. I have a lot more work to do. But it's a nice project to have."

As for what's next, anything could happen. *Sex Education* co-star Ncuti Gatwa was announced as the new Doctor Who earlier this year. When *TF* asks if there's a huge pop-culture character she'd like to reboot, Mackey responds, "Yeah, there is, but I'm not going to say what it is. I don't want to jinx it, in case one day, it could happen. Apparently I'm superstitious."

For now though, her horizons are vast. "I want to do anything. I'm not precious. I want to try everything. I want to play. I want to do lots of things. You can do a ridiculous genre – it just has to be in the right hands. It comes back to the conversation of who are the people you want to work with, and who are the people you trust. It's exciting. There's so much out there. There's so much to do. I'm not pretentious or precious about genres. I just want to try everything."

EMILY OPENS IN CINEMAS ON 14 OCTOBER. BARBIE OPENS JULY 2023.



IN THE REALM OF

THE

SENSES

After the extremes of his earlier work, South Korea's Park Chan-wook reins it all in to conjure one of the great films of his career: the beguiling DECISION TO LEAVE. But is it a film noir, a romantic drama or something even more cryptic? Total Film joins him to search for a decisive answer.

WORDS JAMES MOTTRAM

There's a scene early on in Park Chan-wook's *Decision To Leave* that crystallises both its main character and the precision filmmaking deployed by the majestic South Korean. Hae-joon (Park Hae-il), an insomniac detective living and working in Busan, has arrived at a local beauty spot to investigate the death of a man who fell from the top of a rock formation, smashing his skull far below. In the very definition of methodical, Hae-joon decides to climb back up the rock to literally retrace the last fatal steps of the victim in reverse.

"It shows his pride, his professionalism, his sense of responsibility as a detective but also the fact that he is the person who would always go by the book," says Park, when *Total Film* settles down for a chat with the grey-haired guru the day after the film's rapturous unveiling at this year's Cannes Film Festival. This being "Director Park", as his collaborators dub him, there are several more layers to consider. By the very end of this exquisite romantic mystery, Hae-joon will follow in the footsteps of this man rather more closely.

You might even add that this vertiginous scene – cunningly constructed with a fake rock formation that was blended with a dizzying backdrop in post – is designed to give you vertigo. Which would be apt. As soon as reviews began to spill from Cannes, the comparisons started. "Park Chan-wook's Latest Is Serving Hitchcock Vibes" wrote *Vulture*, echoing the sentiments of many others. "This reaction is so amusing to me," says Park. "Because while I was making this film I was not thinking about [*Alfred*] Hitchcock or any of his films."

The more he considered it, however, the more he conceded the influence of cinema's greatest master of suspense. "Perhaps that is just in my blood, in my DNA, in my subconsciousness or something. Because when I was studying film, Hitchcock films were my textbook." In particular, the director's 1958 San Francisco masterpiece *Vertigo*, in which Jimmy Stewart's former detective is hired to tail Kim Novak's inscrutable "Madeleine". Here, Hae-joon begins to investigate the wife of the dead man found at the bottom of the rock – the Chinese-born Seo-rae (Tang Wei).

That this investigation soon turns to an obsession would likely see both Hitch and Stewart nodding with approval if they were still around. Much younger than her late spouse, Seo-rae doesn't seem so distressed by his death. When she returns to her work as a care nurse, she casually notes, "Living old people come before dead husbands." And yet for all the suspicions she arouses, the already-married Hae-joon can't shake her from his system. Even after her husband's death is ruled suicide, Hae-joon and Seo-rae continue to spend time together – an ethical quagmire for such a by-the-book cop.

Still, this is just the beginning of one of the most methodical, mature films of Park's career, more than two decades on from when he was launched onto the international stage with his 'vengeance' trilogy, including 2003's *Oldboy*, which took the Grand Prix in Cannes. Since then, he's broadened his remit with comedy (2006's *I'm A Cyborg, But That's OK*), horror (2009 vampire tale *Thirst)* and, most recently, the espionage-thriller (his TV miniseries, the English-language John le Carré adaptation *The Little Drummer Girl*, with Florence Pugh).

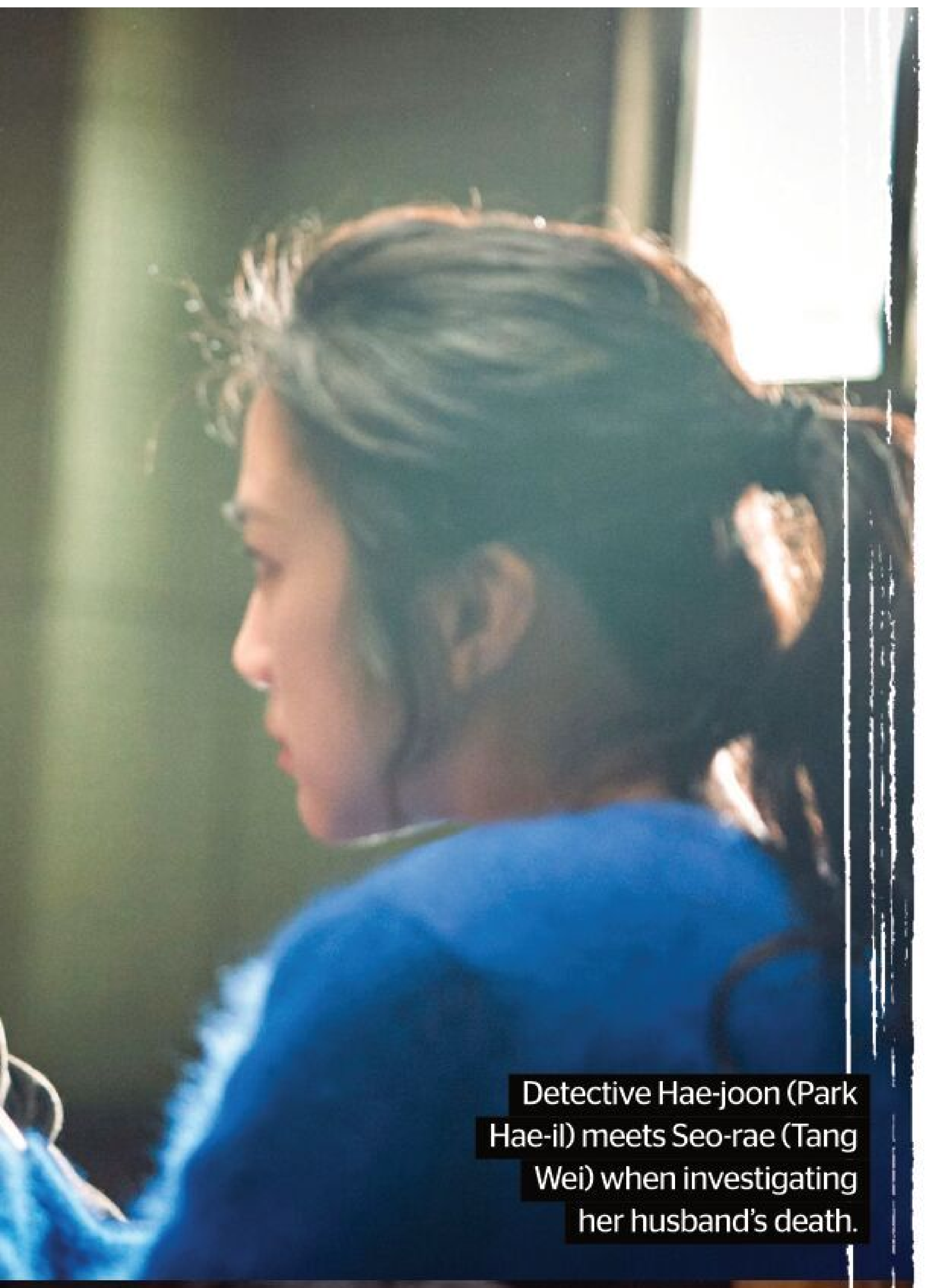
GREAT EXPECTATIONS

Decision To Leave, which secured Park the award for Best Director in Cannes, surely marks a new era for the 59-year-old. "When I started preparing to make the movie, I wanted to make a film for adults," he says. While there are flashbacks to the Park of old – a rooftop fight involving the use of a chain-link glove recalls some of the bruising scraps in *Oldboy* – he perversely switches directions. When fans realised he was making an adult film, expectations swirled that it would be "erotic, sexy", like his 2016 feature *The Handmaiden*. "So I did the exact opposite."

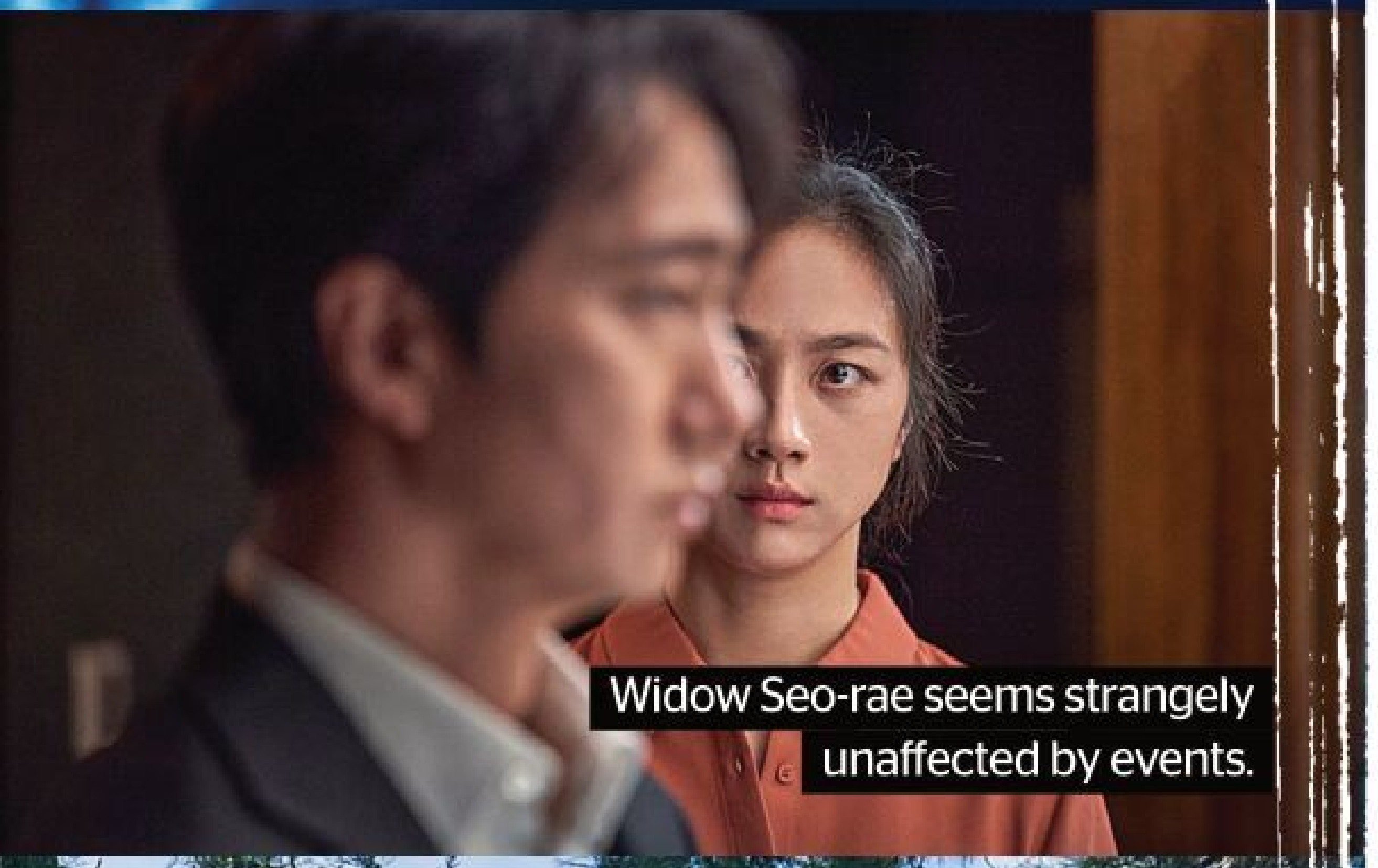
Yet Park's film is laid with booby traps. Like the casting of Chinese star Tang Wei as Seo-rae. She exploded onto the international scene as a spy in Ang Lee's own erotic classic, 2007's *Lust, Caution*, enough to excite Park fans that she would be returning to such heated terrain. It was the director's shared love of the actress with his *Decision To Leave* co-writer Jeong Seo-kyeong that convinced them to build a character around her. Yet despite Seo-rae's resolute mien and independent mind, she's not – repeat *not* – a femme fatale. "I don't want Tang Wei's character defined as such," says Park.

Indeed, the subject of *Decision To Leave*'s genre is a thorny one. "This film could be defined as a film noir," he continues. "And that's what is seen when you watch the trailer. But I tell my people, 'Let's be careful on that.' I don't want this film to be seen as

CURZON



Detective Hae-joon (Park Hae-il) meets Seo-rae (Tang Wei) when investigating her husband's death.



Widow Seo-rae seems strangely unaffected by events.

Hae-joon has always been a methodical detective, doing everything by the book – until now.

just that, I would like to see more emphasis on the romantic side of this film." He sees it as both a police procedural and a romance; indeed, when we meet in a salon in Cannes' Majestic Hotel, decorated with huge stills from the film, showing the luminous work of cinematographer Kim Ji-yong, the sheer beauty of the images suggest this is anything but a shadowy noir.

In Park's opinion, it's a character drama where the detecting isn't only done by the guy with the badge. "You see a man and a woman meet and they are exploring, they are testing each other, they're trying to find out what the other person's thinking, what their true intentions are. They are trying to solve the mystery of the other person. And when they finally find out the other person's true intentions and their thoughts then the mystery is solved. So if you say that this film is about investigation… it's not just from the point of view of the policeman. It's also from the suspect or the woman's side – she is also trying to find out and she is the detective in this drama."

Seo-rae's mysterious motivations also make *Decision To Leave* a hugely enigmatic film. Her late husband, we learn, was instrumental in securing her Korean citizenship, and in seeing her grandfather decorated for his services to the Korean independence movement. Did she use him and drop him (quite literally)? Could she really have pushed him from the peak? Yet what is her interest in Hae-joon? Does she simply want to evade capture? Or does she harbour genuine feelings for him? Certainly, when she finds a wall covered in photographs of unsolved crimes, she's left wondering if this fastidious sleuth has ever found true peace.

When Park and his co-writer began work on the film, all they knew was that the character would be Chinese. "That was the starting point," admits Park, "and then we thought, 'Why is she here? What does she do in Korea?' So from those questions, we started to stack up and give depth and dimensions to the character. And we both love describing a character who is isolated, who is lonely, and we thought [*about creating*] this character being Chinese living in Korea, whose society is quite excluding [*of*] foreigners."

It's an isolation that even extends to the language issues between Hae-joon and Seo-rae, who speaks her Korean in a formal manner. "[*That*] makes Seo-rae's character a lot more charming and attractive to Hae-joon," explains Park. "The Korean that Seo-rae speaks is not wrong. The expressions are very correct. She speaks very good Korean. It's just that her pronunciation and intonation, accents, may sound a little bit different. But I think Korean people feel they will find that very funny – and also cute. Very refreshing at the same time."

Oddly, one of the film's biggest inspirations was not Hitchcock, but another British director: David Lean. Specifically, his 1945 romantic drama *Brief Encounter*, which stars Celia Johnson and Trevor Howard as two people married to others who meet by chance at a railway station and begin to fall in love. "I kind of like the mood in this film," says Park, who urged his co-writer to watch it. Certainly, they've conjured something similarly chaste, where the eroticism bubbles away beneath the surface, all suggested in exchanged glances and gestures.

Inevitably, there will be fans of Park's earlier works that lament the more tasteful elements of this film (he was, after all, a director who once contributed to the gory anthology work *Three… Extremes*). "Who knows?" he shrugs. "My next project will [*maybe*] have even more violence and sex!" While he's currently working on HBO and A24 television series *The Sympathizer*, an espionage tale set in the final days of the Vietnam War, he points out that he's also developing a western that, he promises, will contain plenty of "violent scenes".

> 'I WENT FRAME BY FRAME AND IF THERE WAS ANY ONE FRAME THAT I COULD CUT OUT THEN I WOULD DO THAT… EVERYTHING'S COMPACT AND DENSE'
>
> **PARK CHAN-WOOK**

Yet *Decision To Leave* sees Park the perfectionist at his most, well, perfect. During post-production, he found the first cut carved out with editor Kim Sang-beom was simply too long. "So the process of reducing the running time was quite long and it was a very rigorous process," he says. "I went frame by frame and if there was any one frame that I could cut out then I would do that." He compares it now to a "machine whose nuts and bolts are tightened to the very end". He grins. "Everything's compact and dense."

That the film was edited during the pandemic only increased the intensity. "I'm not going to just sit idle… I'm going to watch the film once again. And what happens when you see it again? There's that one little thing that you want to change." Or to put it another way, invoking an old Korean saying: "If each dust [*particle*] accumulates together then it will become a big mountain." Maybe it's this accumulation that makes *Decision To Leave* so special; from that reverse-up-the-rock to the snow-covered cliff confrontation in the final act, it reaches plateaus and peaks other films only aspire to climb.

DECISION TO LEAVE IS IN CINEMAS FROM 21 OCTOBER, WITH PREVIEWS FROM 17 OCTOBER.

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Aubrey Plaza shows off her dramatic chops in the titular role in John Patton Ford's nail-biting thriller, Emily The Criminal. Total Film meets the team behind one of the year's most compelling and stressful thrillers.

WORDS LEILA LATIF

In the US, President Biden recently announced that up to $20,000 of student loans would be forgiven, which will make a life-changing impact on many people who have spent their entire adult lives paying huge sums intensified by high interest rates, barely able to keep afloat. But, that impact isn't life-changing enough for the people whose debts are so large that even a $20,000 reduction will still leave them drowning.

This is the case for the antihero at the heart of *Emily The Criminal*, in which Aubrey Plaza goes into full thriller mode in the story of a woman pushed to the brink while saddled with $70,000 worth of debt. Writer/director John Patton Ford – here making his debut – drew from his own experience. "I got out of school with a tremendous amount of debt, over a hundred thousand dollars," he tells *Total Film*. "Suddenly I had to pay $1,200 a month in loan payments, another $1,100 in rent," he remembers shaking his head. "So you're just working 60, 70 hours a week, doing everything you can to survive and trying to pay off this endless thing. It just feels totally hopeless."

'Oh my God, the movie is teaching people how to do credit-card fraud. That's so cool!'
AUBREY PLAZA

When we meet Emily, a job interview is going badly, and from the moment Plaza is on screen she seems utterly crushed by the weight of the world. That palpable desperation was part of the appeal for the actor/producer, who has been carving out a fascinating filmography since breaking out as April Ludgate in *Parks And Recreation*. "That's what I loved about the script, from the first moment she's already at 11. It was so enticing to play somebody that from the second she's on screen, she has had enough and is carrying all that baggage."

Despite starting with Emily in such a tough spot, the film then pushes her further and further and she resorts to increasingly desperate and dangerous acts to stay afloat. What begins as a small job for a quick buck spirals into car chases, box cutters, and huge sums of money at stake. The effect is thrilling and extremely stressful, reaching the sort of heart-attack-inducing moments the Safdie brothers (*Uncut Gems*, *Good Time*) are known for, but Ford is amused by that comparison.

"It's funny, I was trying to write it in an authentic way that reflected how I felt day to day working a catering job and having debt and interacting with all these sketchy people and, and just trying to survive with a dream," he says. "Once I made the film, I got to see the people's reaction to what for me had become totally normalised. I hear that, 'Wow, this is a very stressful story,' or, 'This is very dark, very anxiety inducing.' But when you've been living in that debt as an underpaid worker for nine years, you forget how upsetting the experience feels to other people."

The relevance of Ford's past to the present-day debt cancellation, amid a spiralling cost of living crisis, feels incredibly prescient. As Plaza puts it, "It's aged really well, unfortunately." But creating apt societal commentary was not her ultimate goal. "Movies to me should be entertaining," she explains. "I don't approach them in a political way. But the fact that this has that underlying narrative is a bonus. There is an opportunity to connect with an audience and a generation of young people who could feel seen through her, and give them some catharsis through the film."

One of the other things many in the audience will achieve, as Emily resorts to more desperate measures, is a functional understanding of credit-card fraud, a crime virtually everyone is aware of but few actually practically understand, including Plaza. "It's such a faceless weird thing, credit-card fraud. It happens to everybody, but it's like the internet, you can't actually see it but it's very powerful. When the prop master brought in the embossing machine, it honestly blew my mind because it is really not that hard."

The potentially instructional nature of *Emily The Criminal* appeals to Plaza's famously dark sense of humour. "It was so funny to watch the movie with the first audience and I looked around and realised, 'Oh my God, the movie is teaching people how to do credit-card fraud. That's so cool!'" she laughs. "It's punk rock!"

As both star and producer, Plaza is doubly responsible for any subsequent crimes *Emily The Criminal*'s audience commits. Plaza has previously produced other projects including raunchy nun comedy *The Little Hours*, genre-bending puzzle box *Black Bear* and social-media satire *Ingrid Goes West*. In this case taking on a dual role meant putting double the faith in Ford's first film.

"With a first-time director it's important to me that they feel open and willing to collaborate and it was just obvious to me we were on the same page from the beginning," she says. "I had the same experience with Matt Spicer [Ingrid Goes West] and Larry Levine [Black Bear] as with John just knowing that this guy was the real deal."

Hearing what Plaza told *Total Film*, Ford can't help but grin, "I'm glad that that's what Aubrey said.

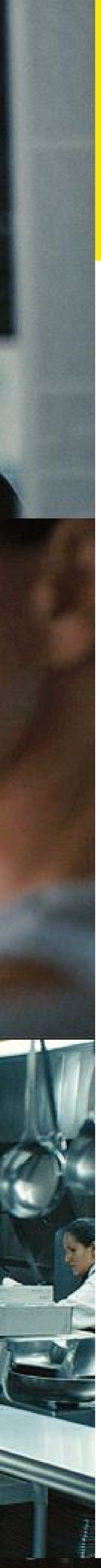
LOADING ONLY

Emily gets more embroiled in crime as the film progresses.

Aubrey Plaza portrays a woman trapped by the rigour of debt.

Theo Rossi, who plays Emily's handler, offers an edgy, confident charm.

UNIVERSAL



I hoped that's how people felt. For me the fun thing about movies is that it's collaborative. You know, it's not like making a painting by yourself or writing a novel by yourself. A movie is this big group thing that kind of feels like summer camp and you're all in it together."

Part of Plaza's advice to Ford was to put more emphasis on the budding romance between Emily and Youcef (Theo Rossi) who is one of the men in charge of the fraud ring. "My favourite part was the love story when I read the script. It felt so unexpected and there's a commonality of pain between them. There's something so romantic about how these fish-out-of-water lost souls find each other and find love…" Plaza pauses for a second before grinning. "I was about to quote Rihanna and say 'in a hopeless place'."

The unlikeness of a love story emerging in the midst of a fast-spiralling thriller meant Ford needed two actors that had an undeniable frisson. "Theo and Aubrey are such different people, from such different backgrounds," he says. "It worked because they just seemed like different animals, with different ways of moving and feeling and thinking. Immediately it felt like these two are either gonna love or hate each other… maybe both."

The tension between the two actors did create issues for the director, but the payoff on the screen proved to him they were worth navigating. "I don't mean to say that they didn't like each other, but they just have different styles, different ways of doing things and of communicating," he explains. "Theo Rossi is very precise, he likes to rehearse things and then execute knowing exactly what he's doing. Aubrey does not like to rehearse at all or intellectualise anything. She wants to just jump in like a ball of emotion and be very present and see what happens. So Theo was constantly frustrated and then Aubrey was by the same token. There's a natural sort of… I don't wanna say hostility, but a difference between them that I feel informed their romance."

That clashing of styles is present throughout the film, which Ford insisted had to be shot in Los Angeles, even if meant stretching the film's modest indie budget, because for him, Los Angeles brought a unique set of pressures to Emily's story. "LA is a very unique place. It's really expensive, it's really hard to get around and diverse in a way that I can't quite compare to anywhere else in the world."

Having grown up on the East Coast, Ford was used to diversity but felt that it operated differently in LA, explaining, "In New York you'll go to a Chinese neighbourhood in Brooklyn, but it's still Brooklyn. In LA you can be in Filipinotown and it feels like the Philippines, you can be in Boyle Heights and it kind of feels like Mexico City, you can be in Glendale and it feels like Armenia. People retain their backgrounds here."

While audiences might be more used to seeing the glamour of Beverly Hills, the grittiness of Compton or even the behind-the-scenes machinations of Hollywood, for Ford the LA of *Emily The Criminal* hadn't ever been fully captured before. "I've never seen a movie represent the faces and the cultures and the languages that I encounter on a day-to-day basis here," he says. "Where it feels like everyone came here with a dream, has the cards stacked against them and is hustling all the time. LA culture is a blank canvas, it's whatever you bring to it which also makes it the most American place you can go."

FORD FOCUS

Out of Sundance, the movie's reception has been rapturous, singling out Ford's skilled direction, sharp writing and fresh take on the film noir aesthetic. As a result he's already reaping the benefits and while he can't disclose details he can say, "There's something I wrote before *Emily* that's a much bigger movie. That's set up at a studio and we're working on that at the moment. It's a much bigger canvas and not quite as centred on one person."

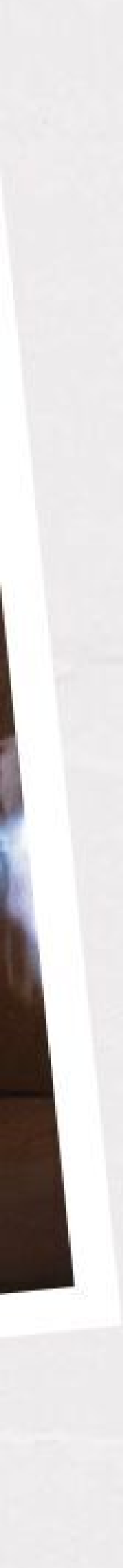
Meanwhile Plaza's idiosyncratic star continues to rise. Having conquered the thriller she is returning to comedy and reuniting with her husband, *Life After Beth* and *The Little Hours* director Jeff Baena, for the dark comedy *Spin Me Round*. She will vacation in style in the second season of *The White Lotus* and soon starts filming *Megalopolis*, a futuristic epic and the long awaited return of Francis Ford Coppola to the director's chair. Much like Woody Harrelson before her ("I love being compared to Woody Harrelson!"), Plaza has gone from sitcom stardom to become one of the most multi-faceted performers in Hollywood. *Emily The Criminal* further proves that there are no limitations on what an Aubrey Plaza film can be. For Plaza, allowing audiences to see her range as a gritty antihero drowning in debt is only part of the appeal. What matters most is not becoming complacent. "I'm so hungry to make great films," she says. "Movies that are memorable, that people want to watch more than once rather than disappear into the void of content…"

EMILY THE CRIMINAL IS RELEASED ON DIGITAL ON 24 OCTOBER.

COLLECTIVE MEMORY

After recent events in the US Supreme Court, with women's reproductive rights curtailed, 1960s abortion drama CALL JANE has taken on an unsettling new resonance. Total Film talks with director Phyllis Nagy and her cast about one of the year's most vital works.

WORDS JAMES MOTTRAM

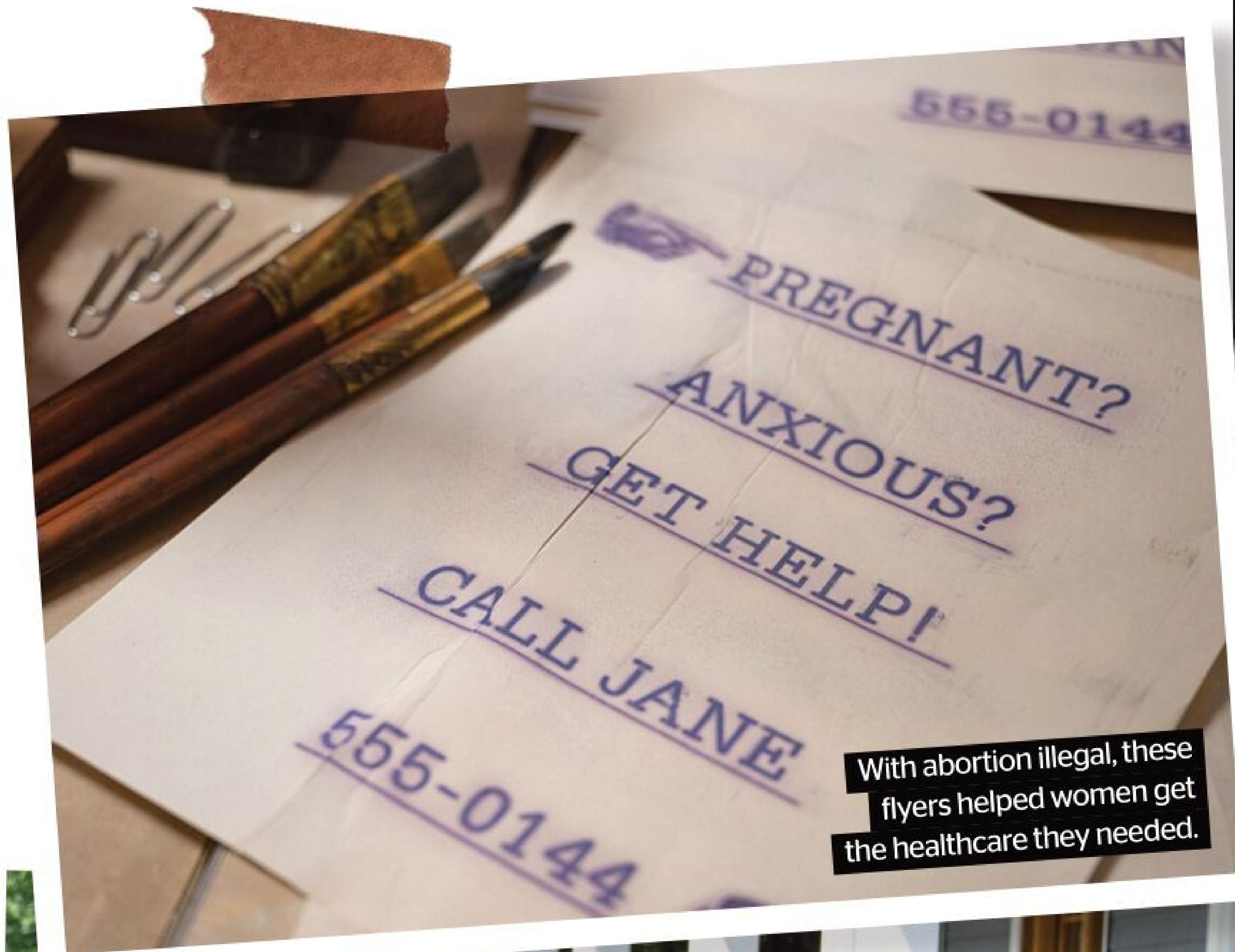


24 JUNE 2022.

A date surely burnt into the consciousness of many. The day that the US Supreme Court overturned Roe v. Wade, the landmark ruling established in 1973 that enshrined abortion as a constitutional right. For the cast and creators of *Call Jane*, it was not entirely a surprise. After all, one of Donald Trump's outgoing acts as president was to appointment Republican-leaning judges to the highest court in the land. "I knew something awful was going to happen," sighs director Phyllis Nagy. "I just didn't think it would be *this* awful."

Since *Call Jane*'s premiere at the Sundance Film Festival earlier this year, it's moved right into the centre of the conversation. Beginning in August 1968, it follows one woman's induction into the Jane Collective, a group who helped pregnant women get safe abortions when it was illegal in the US to do so. "The relevance of it is scary," notes Kate Mara, who co-stars alongside Elizabeth Banks and Sigourney Weaver. "I guess it kind of feels like it was meant to be told at the time that we told it."

Nagy's film isn't the only one to tap the zeitgeist. Last year's Venice Film Festival-winner *Happening* told of a young French student gathering her resources to terminate an unwanted pregnancy in secret, while Eliza Hittman's *Never Rarely Sometimes Always* followed a 17-year-old as she left Pennsylvania to seek an abortion in New York, where she doesn't need parental consent. "I think about that film all the time," says Weaver, "because that, of course, is a modern-day story. And it's during Roe. And it shows how precarious the situation of that young woman is and how alone she feels."



With abortion illegal, these flyers helped women get the healthcare they needed.

Elizabeth Banks plays the perilously pregnant Joy, with Kate Mara as her Republican-voting neighbour Lana.

C*all Jane* took shape around six years ago, when co-writers Hayley Schore and Roshan Sethi began scripting an abortion drama that turned the clock back to the Jane Collective. When the script reached Nagy, it stunned her. "What really appealed to me about the script was that I saw an opportunity to create a film that was not just going to preach to people who already believed its viewpoint," she says. "There was enough there that I knew I could do it with humour and seriousness."

At this point, Elizabeth Banks was already attached to play Joy, a fictional housewife from the Chicago suburbs married to lawyer Will (Chris Messina). Already blessed with teenage daughter Charlotte (Grace Edwards), Joy falls pregnant again, only to discover a heart condition that may cause her to die in childbirth. With no doctor able to legally help, the miracle of birth is about to turn into a nightmare – until she sees a flyer urging her to 'Call Jane'. "No one in a position of authority was going to help her survive," says Banks. "Under those circumstances, a woman who was unlikely to bend the rules actually breaks them."

For Banks (*Pitch Perfect*, *The Hunger Games*), *Call Jane* was more than just another role. A pro-choice advocate – she's chair of the non-profit Center for Reproductive Rights Creative Council – in March 2020, she stood outside the Supreme Court, addressing a crowd of protestors. "Abortion care cannot be just a privilege preserved for those in the right state, the right economic class," she urged. "It must be a right." It left Weaver impressed. "She's been out in front of the Supreme Court speaking out for choice for a long time now," says the legendary actor who, at 72, can remember a time before Roe was passed. "I was in college, in the '60s. It was a very political time in our country. And there were many women's groups. There were a lot of women's support groups. It was a time of intensity. People were protesting the [*Vietnam*] war. And what I find so interesting [*about* Call Jane *is that*] it sounds so familiar to me. I totally recognise it."

Weaver's fictionalised character, Virginia, appears loosely based on Jane founder Heather Booth. "Part of the reason these women came together, originally, with the real Call Jane, was that it was a women's group that responded to bias at the University of Chicago," explains Weaver. "They didn't want women, for instance, to use the library because they thought they would distract the men from doing their work. There was a real bias in favour of men at these large universities. And so women came together to support each other… so it was a very grassroots thing."

Although this was never meant to be documentary-like in its precision, Nagy felt it essential to get the medical procedures the Janes employed spot-on. Right down to the metal instruments used. "All of those details had to be scrupulously correct," she says. "This is what happens or happened. It's still what happens, with very minor differences." While it's not

VERTIGO

Sigourney Weaver is group leader Virginia.

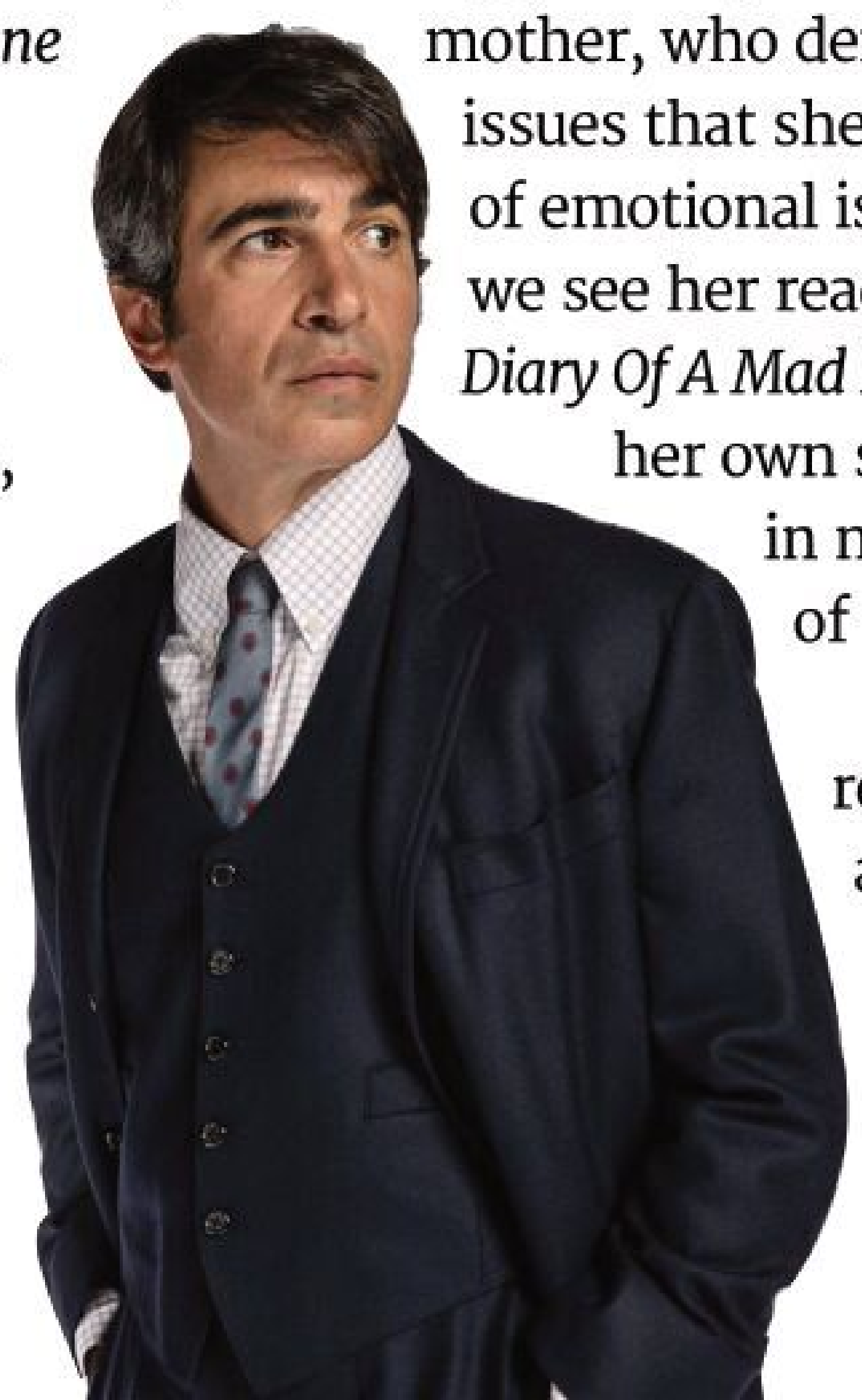
Wunmi Mosaku as Gwen helps keep things covert.

> **‘I HOPE THAT CALL JANE WILL REMIND WOMEN OF HOW STRONG WE ARE’**
>
> **SIGOURNEY WEAVER**

quite as chilling as the backstreet abortion in *Happening*, Joy’s experience shows just how vulnerable women are in such situations.

When the film premiered, reviews criticised the approach to the Jane Collective’s covert operations. “There’s hardly any sense that they could get caught,” said *Variety*. Yet Nagy argues that she didn’t want the film “buying into a Hollywood version of how people operate in their daily lives”. Meaning? “Responding to constant threats and fear and, ‘Ooh, the police are coming,’ because that’s not how any of this works,” she says. “It’s not a thriller.” While the Chicago police raided the Janes’ safe houses from time to time, it rarely led to anything substantial, she says.

Rather, *Call Jane* is a film about collective, affirmative action. “I hope that *Call Jane* will remind women of how strong we are, when we come together, how much we can accomplish,” says Weaver. In the film, after Joy gets her abortion, she begins to help the Janes, joining a group that ranges from Gwen (Wunmi Mosaku), a Black Power advocate, to the patient-tending Sister Mike (Aida Turturro). The lone male in the group is Dean (Cory Michael Smith), the doctor who performs the operations.



“I felt like I was joining a long tradition of women caring for and helping each other,” says Banks, when she took on the role. “This goes back thousands of years: healers, midwives, the red tent. These were communal experiences. And Phyllis, she’s taken the torch and run with it. She’s very clear about what this story means, and what she wants to convey about the status of the fight for reproductive rights. It’s not like taking your medicine, though… it’s all very human and completely relatable.” Weaver agrees. “It’s not as if this is a laborious experience. It’s a very entertaining film.”

While the focus remains on Joy and the group, there is a counterpoint: Mara’s character, Lana. Joy and Will’s next-door neighbour, Lana is a self-medicating, Nixon-voting Republican who endures her own struggles. “My character is a widow, a single mother, who definitely has some drinking issues that she’s battling with [*and*] a lot of emotional issues,” says Mara. That we see her reading Sue Kaufman’s novel *Diary Of A Mad Housewife* rather symbolises her own stasis – an isolated woman in need of the sisterly friendship of the Janes.

As the film readies for release, the fact that it’s arrived in the shadow of the Supreme Court’s decision has left some shell-shocked. “It breaks my heart that it’s coming out in a world where people really seem to have forgotten those bad, bad old days,” says Weaver. “I thought there would be discussion of Roe v. Wade and time for people to express their different views. And I thought the government, the court, might put some other restrictions on it. I think we were expecting something like abortion is illegal after 15 weeks. But now, it’s mostly illegal after six weeks… women often don’t even realise they’re pregnant in the first six weeks.”

She admits she didn’t see this Roe reversal coming. “I felt it was the law of the land for 50 years and the justices who overturned it had all spoken publicly in front of Congress and reiterated their support for standing law. And I think it’s a very unpopular decision. I think it has politicised the court. I don’t feel that Americans, even Christian Americans, want to intrude on women’s lives in this Draconian way.” She cites the horrors women are now facing – even a 10-year-old Ohio girl who was raped and had to flee to Indiana to get an abortion. “If she’d stayed in her state that little girl would have been forced to give birth.”

Nagy is trying to remain optimistic, following recent events in Kansas when voters rejected an anti-abortion amendment designed to eliminate the state’s constitutional protections for abortion rights. “Basically decapitating Roe, I feel may backfire on them, as it already has,” she says. “It’s energised women, it’s energised voters already, as we see in Kansas.” As for *Call Jane*, Mara feels it offers hope. “That’s why it was important to be a part of it, to remind people of what sort of hard work and dedication and activism and using your voice can really do for your country.”

The message is clear, adds Weaver. “I hope our film can remind women to not despair, that we can take care of each other, we will fight this… even if we have to fight it state by state.” If anything, it’s about reclaiming the choice that Roe gave. “Women suddenly had the freedom to have careers, to choose the number of children they could have. And that was one of the statements that Call Jane made, which is [*that*] we are for every woman having as many children as she wants, when she wants, if she wants. That was their rallying cry. And that right has been torn away.”

CALL JANE IS IN CINEMAS FROM 4 NOVEMBER.

THE
TOTAL FILM
INTERVIEW

INTERVIEW **JANE CROWTHER**

'YOU BETTER BE MAKING STUFF YOU REALLY WANT TO MAKE, AND NOT JUST STUFF THAT FEELS EASY'

OLIVIA WILDE

Having transitioned from actor to director with hit comedy *Booksmart*, Olivia Wilde makes a sophomore left turn with tricky period thriller *Don't Worry Darling*. She tells *Total Film* how she's spent a career observing directors in order to challenge herself, ensure a 'no asshole' set environment and surprise audiences.

PORTRAITS **LIZ COLLINS**

Though we're talking in a luxe hotel room in Berlin in early August, where Olivia Wilde is "meeting friends" (a quick Google search reveals her boyfriend, Harry Styles, is playing in the city that night), the actor/director isn't a fan of comfort. It's not, she says, what keeps one sharp. "The worst thing is to be comfortable," she says when talking about her artistic output, hands waving expressively as she talks, her gold signet pinkie ring flashing in the afternoon sun. "If you're comfortable, and you feel you're leaning back on any sort of accomplishments, then you won't be paying as close attention."

Wilde has been paying close attention to the business end of moviemaking for years – ever since she came to attention as Alex on hit TV show *The O.C.*, and through roles in *House*, *Tron: Legacy*, *Cowboys & Aliens*, *Her* and even her recent outing in *Ghostbusters: Afterlife*, the 38-year-old has been watchful of directors (good and bad) to inform her move from on camera to behind it. That marinated knowledge was successfully parlayed into delightful high-school comedy *Booksmart* in 2019.

Booksmart stars Kaitlyn Dever and Beanie Feldstein in discussion with director Wilde.

Ever the student, Wilde recalls her enthusiasm for every aspect of making the film, wanting to learn *everything*. "I remember showing up for six hours of 'loop group' recording, and the engineers were looking at me like: 'A director has never sat in here for six hours to listen to people making stomping feet noises, and coughing in the back of a crowd.' I was like, 'Are you kidding me? I want to suck up every part of this process.'"

Having debuted her scrappy comedy at SXSW, now she and screenwriter Katie Silberman unveil their next ambitious collaboration at the Venice Film Festival with something diametrically different. A proud feminist and daughter of two journalists, Wilde has crafted twisty period thriller *Don't Worry Darling*, which follows '50s housewife Alice (Florence Pugh) living a perfect life with hubby Jack (Harry Styles). That existence shows cracks as Alice starts to question the status quo of a patriarchal society and what shadowy leader Frank (Chris Pine) is really trying to achieve…

To say any more is to risk spoilers, but Wilde, infectiously enthusiastic, sees dangerous parallels in her work and the eroding rights of women making the news when we chat. Quite the 180 from the trials and tribulations of high-schoolers seeking their party high. "*Booksmart* was a story about choosing joy," she nods. "And this was a story about ignoring joy, and focusing on the more terrifying and difficult aspects of reality." Some of that reality infects the promotional roll-out of the film a few weeks after we talk when Shia LaBeouf's exit from the project becomes a he said/she said controversy and speculation runs rife of interpersonal issues between Wilde and Pugh.

Wilde had considered playing the role of Alice herself, but she knew she'd found the actor to essay this particular brand of revolution when she saw Pugh in *Midsommar* and she's aware that 'Flo' might have had a difficult time during shooting. "I think if you speak to any actor who has played a character whose entire world is being demolished, and everything that they know and trust is being twisted and demolished, they will say that the experience of making the film was quite difficult. So poor Flo! The rest of us were jumping around in this beautiful fantasy world that we had built, and she had to remain in this very difficult place."

That difficult place will be revealed with all its throughlines to 2022 society when the film premieres, and, says Wilde, it will show all of the skills she's collected from a *Who's Who* of filmmakers over the years. "It's about creating an environment conducive to the best performances, while also finding a unique way to tell a story stylistically – and to create something original that will provoke thought."

With your debut film, *Booksmart*, being such a hit, what was the process for choosing your follow-up – the 'difficult second album' scenario?

I think that it's important to make the movies that you want to see. I had this moment where I realised, 'Oh, I actually can take all the lessons I learned from the first film, and churn out something else, and learn a lot more. And how do I want to do that? Do I want to do that in familiar territory, or do I want to move to a different territory?'

It became clear to me that I wanted to try something completely different, and, to sound incredibly generic and cheesy, stretch different muscles. I really wanted to create some new neural pathways.

The best work I've ever done has come from having to be very present, and paying very close attention, and being very light on my toes. It's like when you travel the world. You find a place that you love, and you can go back to that city, and remember the streets you walked on. Or you can say, "Discovering that city was so incredible. Let's go discover a new one."

Don't Worry Darling was also a step-up in terms of how challenging it would be as a director. But there's also the fact that – who knows how many films I'll be able to make in my life? I feel very lucky to have made one, and now two.

There's a sense of, if you're lucky enough to be working as a director, you really have to value each opportunity, and think, 'OK, you better be making stuff you really want to make, and not just stuff that

Wilde (seated, right) has assembled an impressive cast including Florence Pugh and Kate Berlant.

feels easy.' As soon as you start making things that feel easy, I think you'll probably start making really bad films.

Without going into spoilers, it feels like such an urgent film thematically…
Unfortunately the film is very timely, and sadly I think it will remain timely for a while. It felt so necessary to make. There were so many questions I wanted to ask with the film that felt like necessary questions – and they are today, even more so. For me, the most essential question we can all be asking ourselves is: "What are you doing to change the system that you acknowledge is broken?" And, "Are you brave enough to actually make sacrifices to change that system?" Because all of us are complicit. And you can be talking about very specific, societal issues within the United States. You could be looking at the larger system of the patriarchy. But I wanted to ask myself, "Am I brave enough to actually sacrifice the system that makes me feel comfortable, and to really tell a story about someone who has everything, and is willing to give it up?" I thought: 'That's a kind of revolutionary story of a heroine I haven't seen.' There are great stories of people throughout history who have been that courageous, but I wanted to tell one that's living in this world.

'THE MPAA WAS REALLY SHOCKED BY OUR FILM'

You also feature sex-positive sex scenes focused on female pleasure and want in *Don't Worry Darling*. Was that something you really wanted to explore?
Absolutely, absolutely. Sex has been defined as a process of women serving men. It's very rare to see women experiencing pleasure on screen. And not only that, but to see that kind of female hunger – and to allow it to be indulged. It was something that I felt very strongly about, and Florence felt very strongly about. So we worked together to construct these scenes that would celebrate that.

The film itself is asking so many questions about consent in the larger sense. But within those moments, I wanted the camera to allow for a scenario that we see so rarely in cinema [*Jack orally pleasuring Alice*], and therefore it feels very taboo. The MPAA was really shocked by our film. And I'm thinking to myself, 'Really? Because if the roles are swapped, there's no issue in terms of rating. But suddenly, when a woman is having an orgasm, it feels NC-17-worthy.' Which I guess is totally unsurprising, really, when you think about our society.

Speaking of Florence – was it important that she and the rest of your cast were as outspoken in the real world as their characters?
I think if you're drawn to the material, then you have that sort of sensibility – this kind of story doesn't appeal to people who don't identify with it in some way. So it drew together a like-minded group of people. Certainly with this cast, we had this incredible group of real disruptors – people who are doing things in their own lives to shake up the system. And Florence as the heart and soul of the film and as our heroine – she, herself, has quite a formidable sense of justice. Authenticity is so important to her. The idea of playing a character who is willing to sacrifice everything she holds close because she cannot survive an inauthentic life – that is something that I think felt very close to Florence. She infused the character with her own sense of integrity. I would write her these notes from the edit bay, just like: "I can't believe how good you are. You're just extraordinary."

Casting was like: find someone who's sort of politically aligned to the character; personally aligned to the

WARNER BROS

character; can handle the amount of work expected; and is able to withstand the incredibly difficult emotional experience of being in a film like this.

Is the same true of casting Harry Styles?
When Florence and I met and talked about who would be her scene partner, it was always about: "Well, who is going to understand what this story is really about? And who is going to be able to personalise it in the same way that the rest of us were?"

It's impossible to fake that sensitivity to the big questions at the very heart of the story. The audience has to root for this relationship, and find authenticity and warmth in it. Harry brought a sensitivity, of what kind of admiring and loving and respecting Alice would really look like – in a way that we completely fall for. Because it is actually authentic. His character isn't faking those feelings. It's just that he… you know, we don't want to give everything away. But all those feelings are authentic.

It's attracting the people who just have a sense of this story being something that strikes a personal chord in them. That's why I believe in just sending out material to people who you think are interesting, and whoever bites are the people who usually are right for the characters. I think if you have to beg someone to play a role, it's not really for them.

Going back to the start in terms of directing, what did you learn from your experience on music videos before making the move to film?
One thing I learned was that I have to really, really love the project in order to give myself completely. Because even on a music video – which is of course a truncated amount of time and working hard – it still requires you to love the song, the music, the concept. After I directed the Red Hot Chili Peppers video [*for the single 'Dark Necessities' in 2016*], I got offered a bunch of videos from different bands, and I realised that I couldn't do it unless I loved the music. And I learned something about myself then – that I won't be able to do good work unless I truly, truly love the material.

Do you think it was harder making a comedy with *Booksmart* rather than making a drama as a first film?
I just love comedy; I'm in awe of it as an organic science. No artificial intelligence could create comedy. I would never have considered myself a kind of expert of comedy but I know how much I love it, and I think what I learned is: it is subjective. Quentin Tarantino has a famous line of:

FIVE STAR TURNS

HOUSE 2007-2012
Wilde first blipped on many people's radars as Remy 'Thirteen' Hadley, a key member of the maverick doc's new diagnostics team assembled in Season 4. "We created her as we went along," said Wilde.

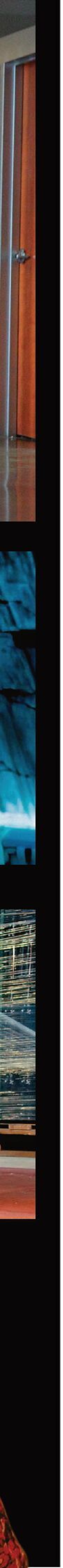
TRON: LEGACY 2010
The last known ISO alive, apprentice to Jeff Bridges' Kevin Flynn, Wilde's Quorra kicks ass. She's "a Joan of Arc of the future", suggests Wilde, who signed up because the original *Tron* is "weird, unique, forward-thinking".

DRINKING BUDDIES 2013
Co-workers at a micro-brewery, Wilde's Kate and Jake Johnson's Luke find their boundaries blurred by beer. Joe Swanberg's indie was improvised and real alcohol was consumed. "We can handle our beer," grinned Wilde.

HER 2013
Credited as 'Blind Date', Wilde's character leaves a big impression in just four minutes of screen time. "Wait, you're not just gonna fuck me and not call me like the other guys, right?" she asks Joaquin Phoenix's Theodore.

BOOKSMART 2019
Wilde's mirthful directorial debut tracks Kaitlyn Dever and Beanie Feldstein's high schoolers as they balance studying and partying. "They're nerds who are gangsta about their intelligence," said Wilde. *JG*

ALAMY



"Make the movie only you can make." And I think for comedy, you tell the joke that makes you laugh, because there's no use trying to make everyone laugh.

When we last talked to you for *Booksmart*, you said then that you spent a lot of time getting great mentors in your life. Whose advice have you really valued in your career?
Straight away I think of people like Martin Scorsese [*who Wilde worked with on* Vinyl], because the scope of the project doesn't really matter. It's the set of values that he adheres to that makes the material so good in the end. He really taught me how to collaborate, how to treat your crew, how to treat your actors, and how to make actors feel that they are being prioritised, the value of rehearsal, and analysing the material together.

Another person is Spike Jonze, who brings a playfulness to the process, and isn't afraid to change the way that the process typically works. Spike doesn't call "action" because he thinks it disrupts the energy of the set. This is something I didn't know when I acted for him [*in* Her], and I was fully out of character, just waiting for someone to tell me to start acting, and then I realised that we were midway through the scene!

> *'I REALISED THE BEST DIRECTORS NEVER YELLED AT ANYONE'*

Jon Favreau, too. I learned so much from him as an actor-turned-director because he has so much respect, not only for the main cast, but he also extends the same amount of energy to every member of the ensemble, even to the background actors on a set. He would gather everyone together when we were making our film [Cowboys & Aliens], and he would explain the context of each scene, so that everyone knew where they were coming from, and what they wanted, and what was happening.

Actors can feel so easily like cattle. All the great directors that I've learned from have made me feel really empowered as a storyteller, to the point where I've eventually wanted to be the director myself. But those are the people I kept in mind every day on set.

I want people to go to the movie theatre and have an emotional experience, but I want them to have a great time. I feel like, at my best, I can make Trojan Horse stories that, on the outside, are just entertainment, but hopefully give you something to chew on later. For *Don't Worry Darling*, the idea is: "Let's make something really entertaining and surprising and kind of delicious." And then hopefully, the next day, or maybe a day later, you're thinking to yourself about these questions: 'Would I be brave enough to dismantle that system that serves me? What am I capable of? How complicit am I?'

You have a "no assholes" policy on set – is that born from bad experiences?
Absolutely. It's remarkable to me that people think they can get anyone to do their best work while being disrespected and yelled at. The idea of governing through fear is something that's very popular in the filmmaking world. Every dictator would claim that efficiency was the reason for their cruelty.

I realised that the best directors never yelled at anyone, and never disrespected anyone. The only directors who were even condoning that kind of behaviour on their set were directors who were, themselves, acting from a place of fear – threatened, unsure of themselves. My "no assholes" policy comes from having witnessed how much better the process is when you don't allow that negative energy in at the gate.

You're wearing two hats – actor/director. What was that experience like?
Drinking Buddies [*which Wilde also executive-produced*] was the first experience of feeling really trusted to be a storyteller, and not just a performer. It was where I really cut my teeth in terms of having to maintain the story in its entirety in my head as I made decisions as a performer in every moment. And that gave me the confidence to think maybe I could do this; maybe I could tell a story of my own and be a director.

With *Don't Worry Darling*, acting in it [*Wilde plays Alice's friend Bunny*] was a thrill because I got to act with these great actors. Being in a scene with Florence Pugh is incredibly fun as an actor because she's so present, and she's so alive and intelligent that, within the scene, you feel brought into her rhythm, her energy, her warmth.

But man, I always laugh, because I was asking friends of mine who have acted and directed in their films – before the film started – "How is it directing and acting?"

And they all said, "It's great. It's so much fun. It's so great."

I realised at a certain point that, by accident, I had asked all men. I hadn't asked any women. And I was like, "Oh, the reason it's easier for men to direct themselves in movies is because

OLIVIA WILDE IN NUMBERS

10
Age when she ate brownies with Chris Farley on the set of *Saturday Night Live*

1984
THE TITLE OF HER BROADWAY DEBUT – AND HER BIRTH YEAR

5
Number of seasons of *House* Wilde appeared in

$24.9M
WORLDWIDE BOX OFFICE FOR *BOOKSMART*

4.2M
Instagram followers

typically men in movies are wearing very comfortable shoes, and they're not in corsets and bustiers and wigs."

So on a very superficial level, one of the most difficult things was being in this very uncomfortable wardrobe, in a wig and in heels, and teetering over to the monitor to look at something, and running back to jump into the scene.

It was only possible because of my cinematographer, Matt Libatique, who was my partner-in-crime in such an intense way. We had made one short film together [*2020's* Wake Up]. We had also worked on *Cowboys & Aliens* together where he was the DP and I was the actor, and I had been so inspired by him then.

Was there any specific advice you got from one of your mentors that helped you navigate that actor/director role?
I had asked Clint Eastwood about acting and directing. And he said a very wise piece of advice which anyone, hopefully, reading this who's acting and directing might be able to learn from, which is that when you're acting and directing, it's so humiliating to be doing your own close-up, that you think you can't possibly give yourself more than one take, because it feels so indulgent – unless you're Warren Beatty, directing *Reds*, and you do 70 takes of yourself. He said: "You're going to be so conscious about giving yourself one more shot, even when you know you need it. Give yourself one more shot."

Tell us how you ended up playing an uncredited cameo as Gozer in last year's *Ghostbusters: Afterlife*.
It was so fun. *Ghostbusters* came out the year I was born, and I feel entirely defined by it because I think it's a perfect film. And also, I now love acting in movies for directors from whom I want to learn – Jason Reitman is a fantastic director. And I just love the Gozer character so much. I said to Jason, "I have no time to do this. It's totally insane for me to come to Canada and put on six hours of prosthetic make-up every day. But I have to witness how *Ghostbusters* is made from the inside-out, and I have to see you in action."

And, of course, it was like a film-school class. What's wonderful is that once you're directing, acting becomes espionage. You're just on set, watching every part of the process. I never left the sets, because I wanted to see what was happening, so I could learn. I tell people, "I will come and do craft service. I'll come play the mail lady. Just let me come and see you work."

You think about people like Scorsese and De Palma and Spielberg and Coppola.

They worked on each other's films. They had a real collective. Their approach was collaborative in that way. There wasn't a kind of protective energy and a competitive energy between them.

Is that something that attracted you to *Babylon*, Damien Chazelle's upcoming starry period drama?
Damien is someone I really wanted to see in action. I'd heard so much about the way he works – and with an enormous amount of preparation. Also, the script for *Babylon* is one of the best scripts I've ever read. There are several scenes in that film that are just perfectly written scenes, that you just cannot believe how complex they are, and how difficult they would be to shoot. And then Damien strides onto set with seemingly not a care in the world – he's so chill – and just accomplishes these seemingly impossible feats, one after another. The film is so difficult. It's so ambitious and a real love letter to movies.

Wilde with her co-stars Hugh Laurie, Kal Penn and Omar Epps in TV hit *House*.

Is there a similar process as an actor, watching how other actors work?
So I think for actors, sometimes you're in a film, thinking, 'I'm doing this because it'd be great for my career. And if it comes out, and it's great, it'll look so cool, and maybe I'll get lots of accolades.' That's a part of the process for any actor. And you're always reminding yourself, "No, it doesn't matter if the movie ever comes out. Just do it for the process." I think that now I understand, for the first time, what it really means to value the process more than the result. Everything about an experience is an opportunity to learn. I feel very lucky because that adjustment in perspective has completely changed my reality.

> *'I UNDERSTAND WHAT IT MEANS TO VALUE THE PROCESS'*

How has *Don't Worry Darling* now shaped what your next project will be?
I think it's made me excited to try my hand at potentially more challenging things. You gain confidence with each movie, and *Don't Worry Darling* definitely stretched my scope of what might be possible, and what I might be capable of doing. So the next projects are now things that feel very different from each other, and equally challenging. The wonderful thing about film is, it's totally abstract in nature. It's something that delves into the realm of impossibility and imagination in a way that audiences are totally prepared for. So why wouldn't you use that? Magical realism is something that's present in all of my movies, and I love the idea of: "The audience is already aware that it's not real. So why don't we stretch that?" They will accept any mythology as long as it's consistent.

Is it still your mission to open doors behind you, making sure you provide opportunity to new talent?
Absolutely. It's the only reason why I'm able to be here and do this job, because people did that for me. And then you understand the power of that kind of daisy chain. I do that by mentoring younger filmmakers, and helping people just get their feet in the door, pitch their material, help them skip a few mistakes. I don't believe like: "You've got to fuck up on your own so that you can earn it."

I remember when I was getting ready to do *Don't Worry Darling*, and I saw Greta Gerwig at a dinner. I said I was struggling with finding a few key components that I was still putting together. She was like, "Skip all this stuff. I want you to call this person, this person, this person. They're the best at what they do. Hire them right now. They're my favourite."

And I thought: 'That's really generous, because a lot of directors wouldn't do that.'

That gives me great pleasure, then, to do it for others. I just want more stories being told, more directors getting the opportunity. I want people to feel like, 'She beat back the path a little bit so that it's not quite as dense to make our way in.'

DON'T WORRY DARLING OPENS IN CINEMAS ON 23 SEPTEMBER. BABYLON OPENS IN CINEMAS ON 20 JANUARY 2023.

OLIVIA WILDE LINE READING

"FLYNN IS TEACHING ME ABOUT THE ART OF THE SELFLESS. ABOUT REMOVING ONESELF FROM THE EQUATION"
QUORRA
TRON: LEGACY

"The one thing they ask of us is to stay here, where it's safe"
BUNNY
DON'T WORRY DARLING

"TONIGHT, NO ONE IS GOING HOME TO THEIR SIGNIFICANT OTHER BECAUSE I NO LONGER HAVE ONE"
KATE
DRINKING BUDDIES

LIZ COLLINS, ALAMY

EDITED BY
MATTHEW LEYLAND
@TOTALFILM_MATTL

★★★★★
ONE TO OBSSESS OVER

★★★★☆
WILL OCCUPY YOUR THOUGHTS

★★★☆☆
AREAS OF CONCERN

★★☆☆☆
IRKSOME

★☆☆☆☆
DON'T BOTHER DARLING

SCREE

THE WORLD'S MOST TRUSTED MOVIE

84

DON'T WORRY DARLING

Wilde/Pugh yonder...

86

90

95

97

OUT NOW

Beast ★★★ p96
Black Mail ★★★ p94
Hot Seat ★★ p96
I Came By ★★★★ p96
The Retaliators ★★★ p88
Samaritan ★ p96
See How They Run ★★★★ p92
Torn Hearts ★★★★ p93
Who Invited Them ★★★ p95
Wildhood ★★★★ p90

16 SEPTEMBER

Bloody Oranges ★★ p95
Clerks III ★★★ p95
Funny Pages ★★★★ p87
Hatching ★★★★ p88
In From The Side ★★★★ p94
Moonage Daydream ★★★★ p86
One Second ★★★★ p93
Strawberry Mansion ★★★★ p94

22 SEPTEMBER

After Yang ★★★★ p89
The Tubular Bells 50th Anniversary Tour ★★ p95

23 SEPTEMBER

The Ants And The Grasshopper ★★★ p93
Catherine Called Birdy ★★★ p90
Don't Worry Darling ★★★ p84
In Front Of Your Face ★★★★ p88
It Is In Us All ★★★★ p94
Juniper ★★★ p96
Silent Land ★★★★ p88

26 SEPTEMBER

Control ★★★ p94
When The Screaming Starts ★★★ p93

28 SEPTEMBER

Inu-Oh ★★★ p93

30 SEPTEMBER

Flux Gourmet ★★★ p91
Girls Girls Girls ★★★★ p91
Love Around The World ★★★★ p95
Mrs. Harris Goes To Paris ★★★★ p88

7 OCTOBER

After Blue ★★★ p90
The Lost King ★★★ p87

10 OCTOBER

Stalker ★★★ p90

ALSO RELEASED

We couldn't see them in time for this issue, so head to gamesradar.com/totalfilm for reviews of the following:

TITLE	RELEASE DATE
Amsterdam	7 October
Ticket To Paradise	16 September
The Woman King	7 October

For more reviews visit gamesradar.com/totalfilm

EXTRAS

Archive/Blu-ray reviews p97-99
TV, Extras, Soundtracks, Games, Books p100-104

REVIEWS

DON'T WORRY DARLING TBC

Dark Victory...

★★★☆☆ **OUT 23 SEPTEMBER** CINEMAS

SEE THIS IF YOU LIKED

THE STEPFORD WIVES
1975
The blueprint for women pressed into patriarchal moulds while the protagonist fights the system.

INCEPTION
2010
Worlds built, worlds torn down... and WTAF is real anyway? Nolan's superlative mind-melder casts a long shadow.

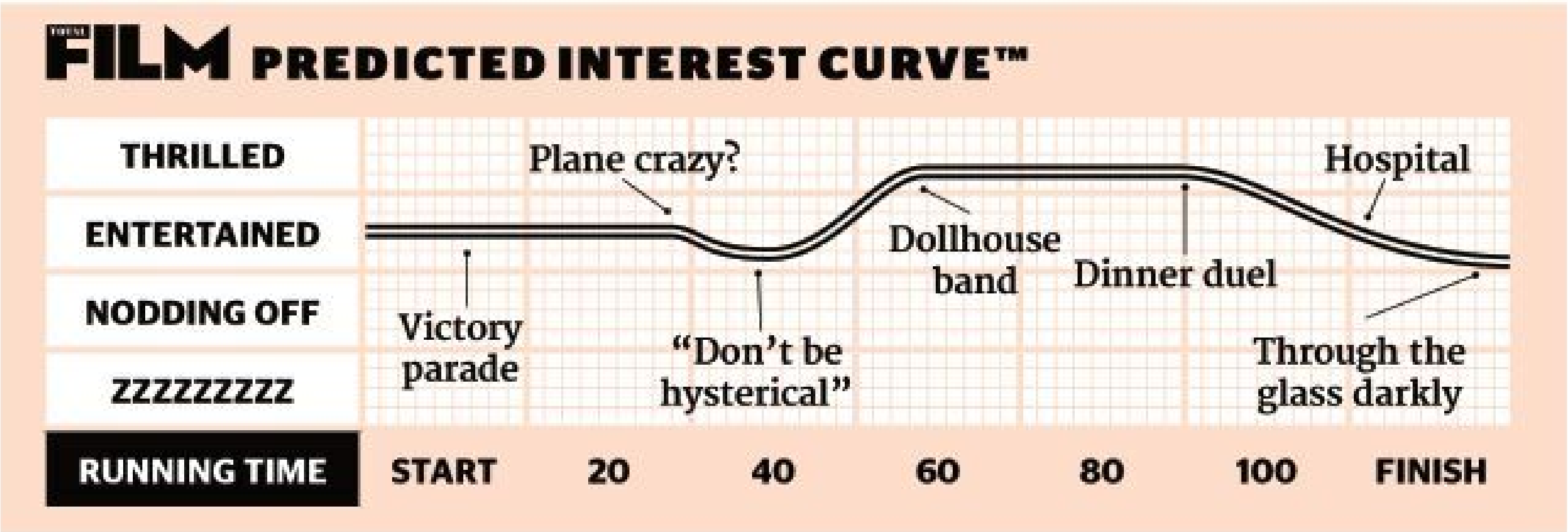
MIDSOMMAR
2019
Nice holiday – oh wait. Exploring trauma via folk horror, Ari Aster's psychological thriller gives Pugh a meaty arc.

For more reviews visit gamesradar.com/totalfilm

"Chaos," shudders Chris Pine's Frank, the charming-slash-menacing leader of the community at the heart of Olivia Wilde's psychological thriller. "A nasty word." It's certainly a word that could be used to describe the pre-release headlines, discourse and tea-spilling surrounding *Don't Worry Darling*'s casting changes, on-set relationships and competing publicity narratives.

A distraction from, or overshadowing of, a film that aims to unpack relevant conversations around gender politics, female allyship and gaslighting? Or a buzz generator that might push more people into cinemas to see it out of rubbernecking curiosity? Either way, the themes of *Darling* are as pertinent to the chatter surrounding its creation as they are to current events and the recent erasure of female body autonomy.

Diving straight into a cold open at a raucous cocktail party, it centres on '50s housewife Alice (Florence Pugh), whose personal wonderland is the new-build utopian desert town of Victory. There, every morning, all the husbands tootle off to work at a shadowy corporation that 'develops progressive materials' under a blanket of secrecy while the women shop, clean, cook and gossip. Alice's marriage to suave Jack (Harry Styles) appears idyllic, ripped straight from the pages of an aspirational magazine. He watches her with adoring eyes at company shindigs. They have the sort of urgent, hot sex that destroys crockery. And she takes as much pleasure from her domestic routine as she does from his ministrations. Even her fun-loving next-door neighbour and friend, Bunny (Wilde), marvels at her perfect life.



Florence Pugh wonders if it's all real, or if she's really trapped behind glass.

WARNER BROS

So why question the status quo when another wife, Margaret (KiKi Layne) makes a scene at a garden party and warns, "We shouldn't be here"? Or when CEO Frank and his imperious wife (Gemma Chan) exude cult-leader vibes with their self-aggrandising speeches? Or when confusing images flash into Alice's consciousness and she begins to experience suffocating visions? As all the men in town will tell her, any dissociative feelings are merely hysteria, tiredness, illness or a case of being "over-served" with alcohol...

Slapped with promotional hashtag #DontSpoilItDarling, Wilde's film successfully builds a delicate house of cards around her protagonist that, once tumbled, will likely provide viewers with plenty to debate about emasculation, patriarchal society and emancipation come the end credits. Spoilery details won't be revealed here; suffice to say that breadcrumbed clues are deftly trailed all the way to the third-act rug-pull. Wilde makes suggestive use of dissonant sound design, repeated ocular imagery, dreamy lens flares and some period details that are slightly... off.

Meanwhile, the efficient script constantly asks viewers to sense check the views of Victory's inhabitants as they rationalise the era's gender divide. "There is beauty in control," Chan's ballet-teaching ice queen tells the women as she drills them in pliés. And then there's Frank's radio hour, broadcast to all homes during wifely

DIRECTOR Olivia Wilde **STARRING** Florence Pugh, Harry Styles, Chris Pine, Olivia Wilde, Gemma Chan, KiKi Layne **SCREENPLAY** Katie Silberman **DISTRIBUTOR** Warner Bros **RUNNING TIME** 121 mins

‘Pugh essays another accomplished, full-bodied performance, bringing viewers along with her on a journey from flirtatious to fearful’

chores, where he insists, “You are worthy of the life you deserve.” Another tricky word: is “deserve” something to be read as reward or punishment?

Pugh – in every scene – essays another accomplished, full-bodied performance, bringing viewers along with her on a journey from flirtatious to fearful. She’s required to disintegrate then galvanise – a trick that does at times evoke the emotional trajectory she nailed in *Midsommar*. Styles is suitably charming if blank as Jack, his real-life heartthrob status enhancing his character’s dreamboat qualities rather than detracting from them.

Pine seems to have the most fun, though, as a silver-tongued guru whose compliments and advice are delivered as smiling threats. A scene where he and Pugh face off over a dining table crackles with electricity. Later, a party in which he forces Styles to dance like a marionette genuinely disquiets.

Though *Don’t Worry Darling* is crisply shot and scored (with Kubrickian leanings), its tension and dramatic impact depend, inescapably, on an audience’s own dissociation – from previous sci-fi and horror cinema. While Wilde’s thriller feels zeitgeist-y due to its release landing amid a reversal of women’s rights, anyone with a passing knowledge of Nolan, the Wachowskis, Argento, Peele or Bryan Forbes might unpick the mystery at the core of Victory a few steps ahead of Alice.

Still, it’s a big career swing for Wilde, following 2019’s teen-com *Booksmart* with something so thematically and stylistically different – and ambitious. And like her debut, *Don’t Worry Darling* showcases a director with an assured hand and a commercial eye. As glossy as any of the surfaces that Alice polishes so diligently each day, it’s a feminist film that asks viewers to evaluate their own social complicity in oppression, while not skimping on really great costumes, gorgeous cars or horny sex scenes. **JANE CROWTHER**

THE VERDICT Controversies aside, a handsome, easily digested, thematically relevant conversation-starter that marks another success for Wilde as director.

David Bowie was so innovative it sometimes felt like there were two of him.

MOONAGE DAYDREAM 15

The freakiest show...

★★★★☆ **OUT 16 SEPTEMBER** IMAX **23 SEPTEMBER** CINEMAS

DIRECTOR Brett Morgen **STARRING** David Bowie **SCREENPLAY** Brett Morgen **DISTRIBUTOR** Universal **RUNNING TIME** 140 mins

Movies about the 20th century's greatest musicians had something of a moment in Cannes this year. Between Ethan Coen's Jerry Lee Lewis documentary and Baz Luhrmann's *Elvis* arrived a David Bowie doc like no other about an artist without equal.

Moonage Daydream isn't your typical rags-to-riches tale of excess and success. Part concert movie, part psychedelic art installation, part elliptical account of the major stages in Bowie's artistic evolution, the film defies documentary convention to create something thrillingly unique.

Reportedly assembled using some five million pieces of material from the Bowie archives, and in the works for half a decade, director Brett Morgen's (*Cobain: Montage Of Heck*) film focuses less on David Jones the person than David Bowie the performer: the shapeshifting rock god that Bowie presented to the world over almost five decades. If personal insights are scarce, artistic and philosophical revelations are plentiful.

Narratively, there's enough of a throughline to keep up with what can generously be called a story. But the film sings in the stunning remastered performance footage, remixed in multi-channel surround sound from Bowie's original stems. Listening to *Moonage Daydream* on an Atmos or 12.0 IMAX audio (Morgen's preference) sound system is like hearing Bowie's recordings and performances anew.

Your mileage may vary with the 'experiential' interludes, which come in the form of animated sequences, clips from music videos and films, and any number of kaleidoscopic screensavers that add nothing to the narrative but are integral elements that help the cultivated atmosphere of transcendental psychedelia.

At 140 minutes, it's not a film in a rush, but neither can it be comprehensive in a way you might expect from one of the first major Bowie documentaries since his death in 2016. Morgen, however, chooses his focus points smartly, ensuring that both Ziggy Stardust fanatics and (absolute) Bowie beginners alike will find something to take away.

As the film reaches a close, one musical moment sums up Bowie's genius in a way that no 10-part talking-head documentary could. In it, Morgen cosmically connects 'Silly Boy Blue' from Bowie's self-titled 1967 album and 'Blackstar', the title track from his final studio album, in a flash of sonic synergy that leaves you wondering if Bowie had, somehow, impossibly, planned every step in his musical odyssey from the start. Who would put it past him? **JORDAN FARLEY**

THE VERDICT Unconventional, almost to a fault, Brett Morgen's impressionistic, experiential Bowie documentary is an electrifying oddity.

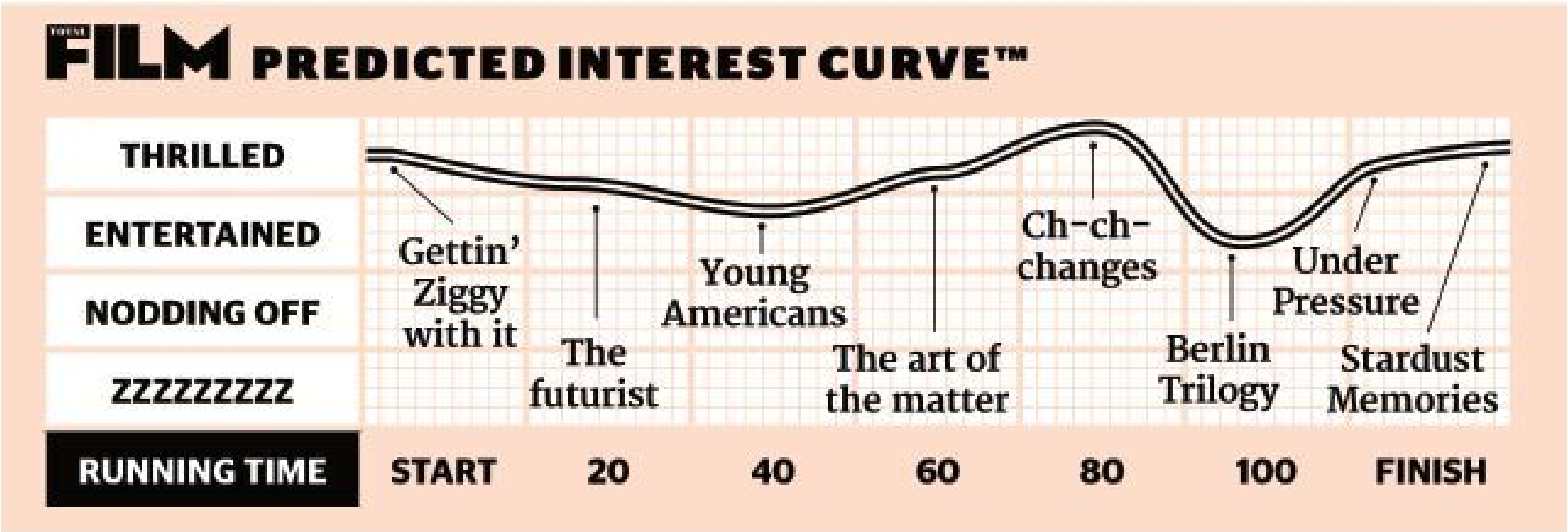
SEE THIS IF YOU LIKED

2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY 1968
Imagine the Star Child sequence, scored by Bowie, for two hours plus and you'll be close to *Moonage Daydream*.

THE MAN WHO FELL TO EARTH 1976
Bowie's perfectly cast as an extra-terrestrial in Nicolas Roeg's sci-fi classic.

COBAIN: MONTAGE OF HECK 2015
Morgen's humanising study of Nirvana's frontman.

For more reviews visit gamesradar.com/totalfilm



UNIVERSAL, PATHE, CURZON

THE LOST KING 12A

Looking for Richard...

★★★☆☆ **OUT 7 OCTOBER** CINEMAS

The very British love of an underdog and a hot historical discovery fuels this offbeat true-life dramedy, following an amateur historian's 2012 crusade to find the long-lost body of prime Shakespeare villain Richard III. Sally Hawkins gets right under the skin of fragile, M.E.-stricken Philippa, who develops a deliciously nerdy obsession with the hunchbacked king, when all people see is her own illness.

Screenwriters Steve Coogan and Jeff Pope find a wry, utterly British comedy in the academic scorn showered on Philippa during the battles she fought to action her spine-tingling hunch about Richard's whereabouts. If the film doesn't have the punch or pathos of *Philomena*, the writers' previous outing with Stephen Frears, there's a scrappy likeability here that offsets the slow pace of her painstaking research. However, it can't resolve the odd mismatch between Philippa's mystic meetings with her beloved Richard and the otherwise down-to-earth framing. This is a story whose TV-movie backdrops (pubs, park benches, dingy council offices) Frears lightens by concentrating on his fine leads.

Coogan is a low-key delight as Philippa's sceptical ex-husband ("Boys! Your mother's found Richard III"). But it's Hawkins' Philippa, growing from shy housewife to doughty campaigner, that drives a gripping example - like *The Dig* and *Ammonite* - of how a determined amateur can remake history. **KATE STABLES**

THE VERDICT Sally Hawkins' steely sweetness sustains this gentle comedy about hunting for the car-park king.

Philippa (Sally Hawkins) wants to stop horsing around and find the remains of Richard III.

Robert's comic books can't compete with our review of the Bowie film on page 86.

I LIKE COMICS

FUNNY PAGES 18

Strip off the old block...

★★★★☆ **OUT 16 SEPTEMBER** CINEMAS, CURZON HOME CINEMA

A budding cartoonist's rite of passage forms an entertaining foundation for the lo-fi debut from Kevin Kline's son, Owen Kline, a Safdie brothers protégé. An A24 production, the film sometimes seems as rough as its adolescent hero's comic strips. Like the oddballs he hangs out with, though, it has an unpredictability and a bitter pathos that gives every laugh a note of tragic despair.

Robert (Daniel Zolghadri) is a 17-year-old student who idolises underground comics creators and detests his cosy Princeton background. Inspired by a teacher to "subvert" expectations, Robert drops out of high school and moves to Trenton, convinced a creative life requires squalor, which he finds in the apartment where he rents a couch from portly recluse Barry (Michael Townsend Wright). Soon, Robert encounters another outcast in Wallace (Matthew Maher), whose former work in comic books convinces his younger counterpart he is mentor material.

An engagingly offbeat and spontaneous comedy emerges, with a tactile quality to its Super 16mm photography. Kline's cited inspirations include *Withnail And I* and *Prick Up Your Ears*, whose argumentative feistiness shows in the tensions between his main players. And if the ending feels a little abrupt after the sustained farcical set-piece preceding it, it at least leaves us feeling that its hero has more than one chapter in him. **NEIL SMITH**

THE VERDICT Kevin Kline's son suggests talent is hereditary with a witty, poignant look at an embryonic artist.

HATCHING TBC

★★★★☆ **OUT 16 SEPTEMBER**

CINEMAS

Finnish director Hanna Bergholm reveals a robust appetite for twisted family dynamics and grisly body horror in this creepy fairytale about a tweenage gymnast who chances on an unattended bird's egg. Secreting it in her bedroom, Tinja is appalled and fascinated by the monstrous corvine it hatches: a masterly eggs-ample of Henson-esque puppetry that proceeds to wreak havoc on her image-obsessed mum's scrupulously curated lifestyle. Impeccable terns from Siiri Solalinna and Sophia Heikkilä elevate a freaky flight of fancy that's worth shelling out for. **NEIL SMITH**

SILENT LAND 15

★★★★☆ **OUT 23 SEPTEMBER**

CINEMAS

Affluent, thirtysomething Polish couple Adam (Dobromir Dymecki) and Anna (Agnieszka Zulewska) have rented a holiday villa in Sardinia, but following a tragic accident involving a migrant worker who was repairing the swimming pool, cracks become apparent in the relationship. There are echoes of Antonioni and Haneke in this slow-burning study of bourgeois alienation from debut writer-director Aga Woszczynska. It's shot with cool detachment – sparing dialogue, an absence of music and close-ups – yet the story speaks to our collective indifference to Europe's ongoing migrant crisis. **TOM DAWSON**

THE RETALIATORS 18

★★★☆☆ **OUT 14 SEPTEMBER**

CINEMAS

After the brutal murder of his daughter, a mild-mannered pastor (Michael Lombardi) takes his chance to get medieval on the perpetrator when he meets a rogue detective (Marc Menchaca) with a thirst for vengeance. Directors Bridget Smith and Samuel Gonzalez Jr. serve up some old-school gore and questionable morals, all baked in a seedy atmosphere. Rockers Tommy Lee and Ivan L. Moody cameo, though Brit co-star Joseph Gatt's villain leaves the strongest impression. Building to a crescendo of bloodshed, this is nasty with a capital 'N'. **JAMES MOTTRAM**

IN FRONT OF YOUR FACE 12A

★★★★☆ **OUT 23 SEPTEMBER**

CINEMAS

Written, directed, edited, scored and photographed by the prolific South Korean director Hong Sang-soo, this minimalist tale concerns former actress Sangok (Lee Hye-young), who's now resident in the USA, paying a rare visit to Seoul to visit her younger sister (Cho Yunhee) and to meet a celebrated filmmaker (Kwon Hae-hyo). Shot with pleasing simplicity and an unhurried flow, *In Front Of Your Face* offers a subtle portrait of emotional resilience, with its female protagonist seeking to remain mindful in the face of life's transience. **TOM DAWSON**

Lesley Manville is an absolute delight in this '50s fashion fantasy.

MRS. HARRIS GOES TO PARIS TBC

Door to Dior…

★★★★☆ **OUT 30 SEPTEMBER** CINEMAS

You don't get all this hoo-ha when you buy a frock from Woolworths," remarks Lesley Manville's widowed cleaner Ada Harris, as she sets her heart on a Dior gown. Harris wants to tart up her drab life in London, 1957, with a bit of haute couture. Several lucky windfalls later, and she's off to France and the famed House of Dior. But with Isabelle Huppert's smug gatekeeper blocking her path, securing that dream dress won't be easy.

Fortunately, from Jason Isaacs' bookmaker and Alba Baptista's Dior model to Lambert Wilson's wealthy widower, several people want to help Mrs. H. realise her fashion flirtations. Working from a 1958 novel by Paul Gallico, director Anthony Fabian (*Skin*) makes no bones about the fact that this is a flight of fancy. Next to grim and grey London, Paris is a world where everyone reads Sartre or attends premieres every night of the week.

The film is a delight, for the most part. Manville is utterly winning as Harris, who has a habit of inspiring everyone she meets. It's a pity, then, that the final act outstays its welcome: between Paris bin strikes, dress dramas and Dior money worries, the overcrowded plot pushes the contrivances too far in the rush to gift-wrap the story with a neat bow. **JAMES MOTTRAM**

THE VERDICT Overlong and overstuffed, but Manville's masterful lead ensures this fantasy is still a real charmer.

PICTUREHOUSE, MODERN FILMS, BETTER NOISE FILMS, NEW WAVE, UNIVERSAL, SKY CINEMA

Check out Colin Farrell's moves in the online family dance-off scene.

AFTER YANG PG

Ghost in the machine...

★★★★☆ **OUT 22 SEPTEMBER** CINEMAS, SKY CINEMA

Do androids dream of electric sheep? Not in this thoughtful sci-fi mood piece they don't. Yet that does not mean they can't keep secrets from their owners, or experience the same feelings of yearning, attachment and loss.

Set in a future America where cloning and "techno sapiens" are everyday realities, *After Yang* offers a ruminative exploration of one robot's surprising inner world. What it also reveals, though, is the gap he leaves behind when he suddenly goes kaput: a hole Jake (Colin Farrell) and Kyra (Jodie Turner-Smith) didn't realise was hiding in plain sight in the minimalist, open-plan home they share with their adopted Chinese daughter Mika (Malea Emma Tjandrawidjaja).

Having purchased Yang (Justin H. Min) as a means to connect Mika with her Asian heritage, loose-leaf-tea purveyor Jake and his businesswoman wife have been happy to delegate child-rearing responsibilities to this uncomplaining automaton. When Yang breaks down, however, he proves unexpectedly hard to repair, sending Jake down a rabbit hole that takes him first to a back-street chop-shop run by a China-hating conspiracy theorist (Ritchie Coster), and from there to a kindly museum curator (Sarita Choudhury) who proposes making an exhibition out of Yang's clandestinely recorded memory files.

DIRECTOR Kogonada **STARRING** Colin Farrell, Jodie Turner-Smith, Justin H. Min, Sarita Choudhury, Haley Lu Richardson, Malea Emma Tjandrawidjaja **SCREENPLAY** Kogonada **DISTRIBUTOR** Sky Cinema **RUNNING TIME** 96 mins

Writer-director Kogonada impressed many in 2017 with his first feature *Columbus*, in which the architecture of that city provided a backdrop for a story of two strangers finding common emotional ground. *Yang* continues in the same muted and reflective vein, the moments of epiphany its titular cyborg finds valuable inviting a broader meditation on the things we retain and the debris we discard.

As he scrolls through his robo's cerebral microfiche, Jake comes across mini-videos of a young barista (Haley Lu Richardson) with whom Yang had a mysterious and possibly romantic affiliation. Deemed no less worthy of storage, though, is a chat about tea leaves that playfully sees Farrell impersonate Werner Herzog.

That Farrell also gets to throw some shapes with the rest of his clan in an online family dance-off is another reason to check this out. Yet the real fancy footwork comes from Kogonada himself, his sleekly assembled speculative drama displaying intelligence in abundance that is anything but artificial. **NEIL SMITH**

SEE THIS IF YOU LIKED

A.I. ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE 2001
A robot kid seeks his creator in this Kubrickian *Pinocchio.*

MINORITY REPORT 2002
Farrell polices a different kind of future in a Philip K. Dick-inspired thriller.

ROBOT & FRANK 2012
An ageing con makes his robo-companion his accomplice in Jake Schreier's wry sci-fi.

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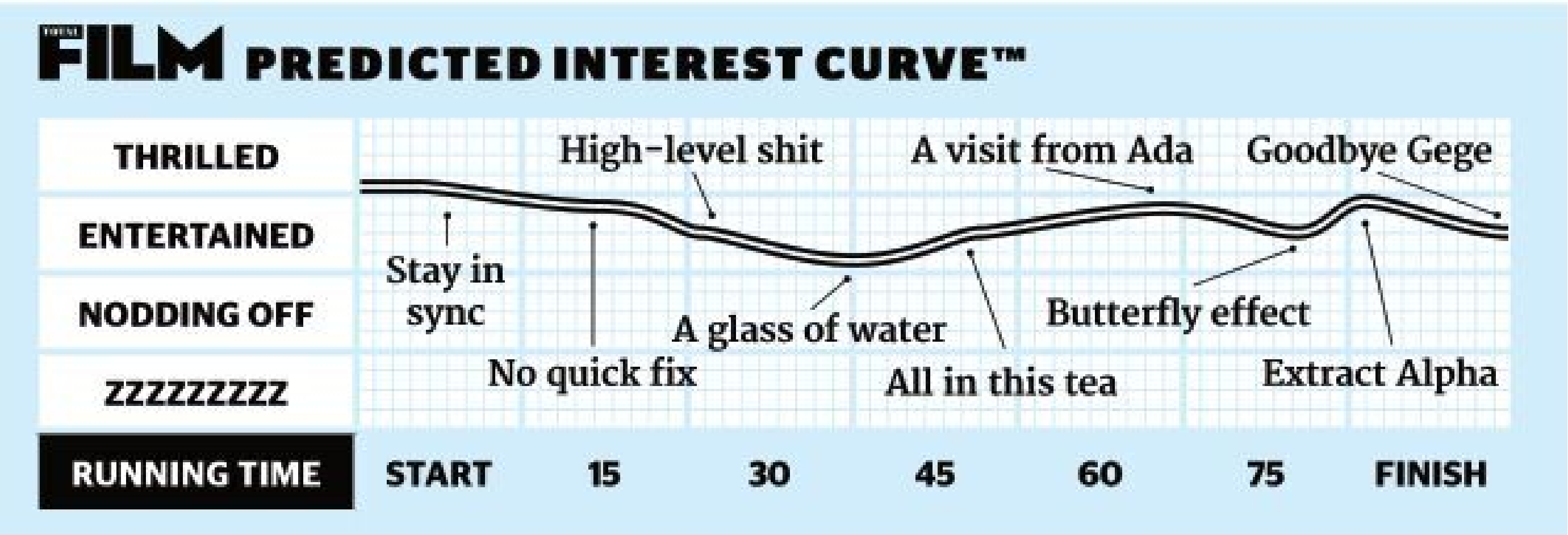
THE VERDICT A film as hauntingly melancholic as it is visually meticulous.



ALL IS VANITY TBC

★★★☆☆ **OUT 14 OCTOBER**
CINEMAS, DIGITAL

When one of their number disappears on location in a London warehouse, photographer Sid Phoenix and his bickering crew are drawn into a surrealist mystery. The visuals may be rough around the edges, but director Marcos Mereles spins the low budget into a boon, constructing a series of tightly wound interactions between the charismatic, likeable cast. As the fourth wall breaks, the film struggles under the weight of its conceit, too wry for its own good. Nevertheless, Mereles brings a lightness of touch to his deftly built farce. **JOEL HARLEY**

AFTER BLUE (DIRTY PARADISE) TBC

★★★☆☆ **OUT 7 OCTOBER** CINEMAS

Part dystopian sci-fi, part spaghetti western, all acid-laced fantasy with overtones of sapphic eroticism… French writer/director Bertrand Mandico creates a psychotropic dreamscape that's impossible to classify, as despondent teenager Roxy (Paula Luna) travels across her female-populated planet with her mother on a quest to hunt down the supernatural killer that she unwittingly unleashed. Seemingly incomprehensible and arguably self-indulgent, it at least delivers a unique visual experience, challenging viewers with its own brand of nightmarish sensuality. **MATT LOOKER**

Medieval mirth and feminist frolics abound in this charming coming-of-ager.

CATHERINE CALLED BIRDY 12A

Saved by the Bella…

★★★☆☆ **OUT 23 SEPTEMBER** CINEMAS **7 OCTOBER** PRIME VIDEO

Critics whetted their knives for *Sharp Stick*, Lena Dunham's first film as director since 2010's *Tiny Furniture*, but the controversial polymath is on surer footing with a likeable, if uneven, adap of Karen Cushman's YA novel. Indeed, the protagonist of her medieval coming-of-ager could almost be a distant ancestor of Dunham's Hannah in *Girls*. Spiky and headstrong, Birdy navigates the pitfalls of adolescence while fending off potential suitors after her impetuous father's spending leaves the family in financial trouble.

Bella Ramsey makes for a spirited lead as she devises devious ways to send her would-be husbands packing. There's period drama in another sense, too, as Dunham addresses the theme of menstruation without patronising younger viewers. While Billie Piper is underused as mother Aislinn, Andrew Scott's Rollo – entertainingly exasperated at his daughter's stubbornness – emerges as the film's MVP, closely followed by a scene-stealing Paul Kaye as Shaggy Beard, the vilest beau of the lot.

Yet despite some charmingly anachronistic flourishes (including medieval-style covers of Elastica's 'Connection' and Piper's 'Honey To The Bee'), Dunham's lightweight confection is never quite as funny as it promises to be: this Birdy takes flight but never quite soars.
CHRIS SCHILLING

THE VERDICT Ramsey gives us a feminist hero to root for, but Dunham's third film falls short of her best TV work.

STALKER 18

★★★☆☆ **OUT 10 OCTOBER** DVD, DIGITAL **EXTRAS** NA

Sophie Skelton and Stuart Brennan star in this low-budget, high-concept two-hander about a young actress and a creepily obsessive camera operator trapped together in a malfunctioning hotel lift. While the story's various twists and turns fail to entirely surprise, committed performances from the two leads and some stylish visual flourishes from director Steve Johnson (*Convergence*) keep things ticking over nicely en route to the satisfyingly grisly finale. *Stalker* may not elevate the genre to new heights, but an enjoyably tense ride awaits herein.
ANTON VAN BEEK

WILDHOOD 15

★★★★☆ **OUT NOW** CINEMAS, DIGITAL

Fleeing their abusive father, a teenager (Phillip Lewitski) and his younger half-brother (Avery Winters-Anthony) embark on a road trip in search of their mother, long thought dead. Travelling across rural Canada, they begin to reconnect with the land and their indigenous heritage, joined by a kindly two-spirit Mi'kmaq pow-wow dancer (Joshua Odjick). Writer/director Bretten Hannam presents a gentle coming-of-age drama, with a tender depiction of burgeoning teen sexuality. The lush country backdrops are as affectionately portrayed as the characters' relationships.
JOEL HARLEY

AMAZON, VERVE, ANTI-WORLDS, KALEIDOSCOPE, PECCADILLO, CURZON, VERTIGO

FLUX GOURMET 15

Arty with a chance of meatballs...

★★★☆☆ **OUT 30 SEPTEMBER** CINEMAS, CURZON HOME CINEMA

From *The Duke Of Burgundy* to *In Fabric*, British filmmaker Peter Strickland has established himself as an expert purveyor of cinematic disruption. So it goes with his fifth feature, where a group of artists (among them, Asa Butterfield and Fatma Mohamed) who make music from the sounds of food take residence at the Sonic Catering Institute run by Gwendoline Christie's patron.

As these culinary creatives squabble among themselves, thrown into their midst is Stones (Makis Papadimitriou), a documentarian who records their every move. Stones is suffering from a terrible (and embarrassing) digestion problem, which Richard Bremmer's appallingly awful medic seems determined not to resolve. And there's also a group of radical rival artists trying to disturb events, in a plot that becomes increasingly bloody and bizarre, scatological and satirical.

Even by Strickland's standards, this is a curio – another nod to old-school Euro arthouse that falls somewhere between *Salò, Or The 120 Days Of Sodom* and *The Cook, The Thief, His Wife And Her Lover*. Certainly not for mainstream consumption, the off-kilter tone alone is liable to give most audiences bellyache. And there are times when it lacks dramatic oomph, as the group's implosion becomes tiresome. But, from Christie's fabulous costumes to a live colonoscopy scene, there's rarely a dull moment. Hardcore Strickland fans will leave sated. **JAMES MOTTRAM**

THE VERDICT Doesn't always land, but in a world of bland, cookie-cutter movies, it still tastes exquisite.

Gwendoline Christie is on top unsettling form as the terrifying food-art patron.

GIRLS GIRLS GIRLS 15

Friday I'm in love...

★★★★☆ **OUT 30 SEPTEMBER** CINEMAS

The winner of the Audience Award at this year's Sundance Film Festival, director Alli Haapasalo's Finnish coming-of-age drama perfectly captures the highs and woes of young love. Told across three consecutive Fridays, the simple story explores the naivety inherent in teenagers' expectations of sex and romance, explored through thrilling flirtations, embarrassing encounters and the acute pains of heartbreak, both exquisite and excruciating.

Best friends set off on different paths in pursuit of romantic happiness when the rebellious Mimmi (Aamu Milonoff) unexpectedly starts a meaningful relationship with dedicated championship ice-skater Emma (Linnea Leino). Meanwhile, Rönkkö (Eleonoora Kauhanen) embarks on a series of physical dalliances in her pursuit of sexual pleasure. The stories draw anchorage from a deep sense of friendship as the teenagers navigate the awkwardness and emotional confusion that follows, all of which comes grounded in naturalistic performances from the three leads – Milonoff in particular seems set for bigger things.

As with many of the best films in this genre, shades of John Hughes and Richard Linklater emerge. Channelling the spirit of such influences, Haapasalo adeptly explores everyday teenage life in all its light and dark extremes. The result is a film that invests fully in its well-rounded characters, building a truthful depiction of young adulthood's choppy growth curves. **MATT LOOKER**

THE VERDICT This coming-of-age drama brims with authenticity, showing the emotional rollercoaster of teen love.

The course of young love rarely runs smooth, but here's it's especially bumpy.

Rockwell and Ronan craft out one of the most likeable screen partnerships in ages.

SEE HOW THEY RUN TBC

Murder most lol...

★★★★☆ **OUT NOW** CINEMAS

DIRECTOR Tom George **STARRING** Sam Rockwell, Saoirse Ronan, Adrien Brody, David Oyelowo, Ruth Wilson **SCREENPLAY** Mark Chappell **DISTRIBUTOR** Searchlight Pictures **RUNNING TIME** 98 mins TBC

Well, here's a delight, a comedy murder-mystery set in 1950s Theatreland that boasts a starry supporting ensemble and, at its heart, one of the most likeable screen duos we've seen for some time.

Said duo are Inspector Stoppard (Sam Rockwell) and Constable Stalker (Saoirse Ronan), him methodical and world-weary, her boasting a bucketful of brio and a penchant to jump to wild conclusions. They're called in to solve a meta-mystery, for just as Agatha Christie's *The Mousetrap* racks up its 100th performance on stage, Leo Köpernick (Adrien Brody), the US movie director poised to adapt, is murdered backstage. "That's the ski he took to the face, and I'm afraid it was all downhill from there," Stalker tells Stoppard, sincerely.

As relationship dynamics and backstories come to light, everyone, naturally, becomes a suspect. So, whodunit? There's sensitive writer Mervyn (David Oyelowo), impresario Petula (Ruth Wilson), film producer John Woolf (Reece Shearsmith), lead actor Dickie Attenborough (Harris Dickinson, doing a fair impression), and more. Stalker, being a film fan, knows just how these mysteries play out. But this is the real world, albeit populated by luvvies, so her knowledge might or might not help.

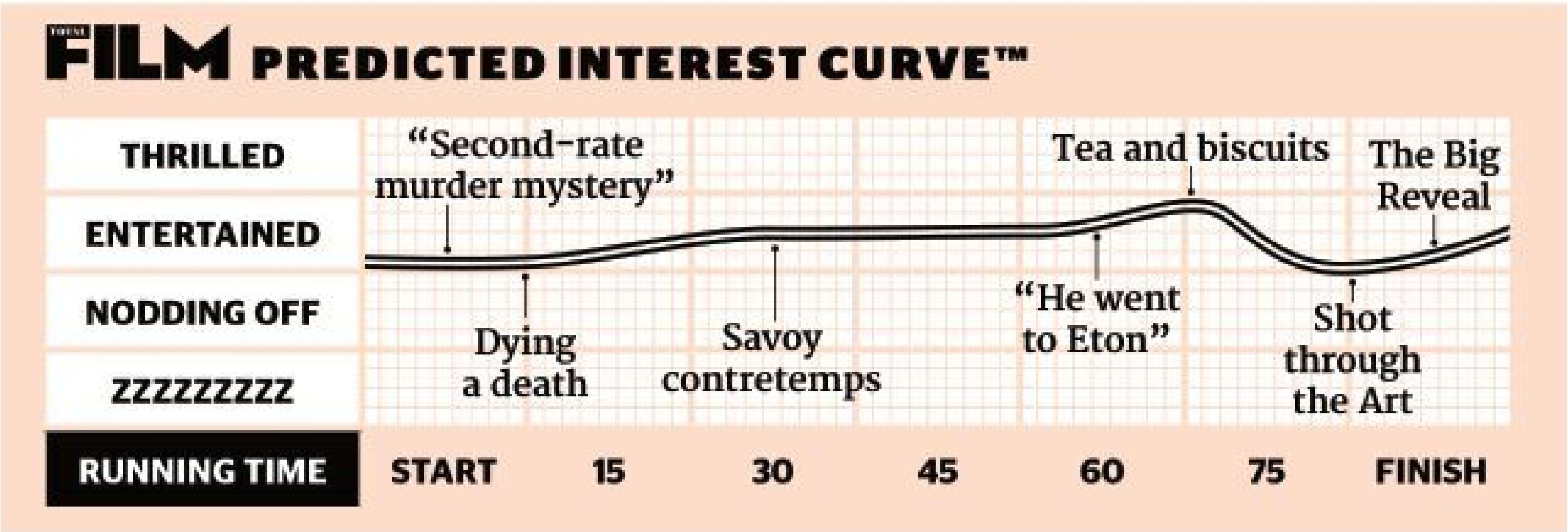
Likewise, the writer of *See How They Run*, Mark Chappell, knows his stuff. Teasing tropes, he has great fun manipulating viewers while knowing that they know that he knows, just as he at once celebrates the genre and comments upon it. And really, it doesn't matter who the killer is (one character points out that murder most foul is always committed for some spurious reason) – it's the journey to that everyone-in-one-room reveal that's the thing, and this one is smart and ceaselessly amusing. Creativity entwines history, and if the meta is laid on thick, consider this: Richard Attenborough really was *The Mousetrap*'s original Sergeant Trotter while the Rillington Place murders, mentioned in the film, took place; in 1971, Dickie played serial killer John Christie in Richard Fleischer's disturbingly grubby *10 Rillington Place*.

But this captivating, chuckle-chocked movie really belongs to Rockwell and Ronan, a comedy duo you'll long to see embark on further cases the moment this one is done. Hilarious and loveable, they also manage the not inconsiderable trick of mining genuine emotion from the glimpses of real-life hardship that pepper the tomfoolery. These bobbies really are London's finest.

JAMIE GRAHAM

THE VERDICT Far better than Branagh's Christies, and as sharp as Johnson's *Knives Out*. There's no mystery to it – make it a franchise.

TOTAL FILM PREDICTED INTEREST CURVE™



SEE THIS IF YOU LIKED

MURDER ON THE ORIENT EXPRESS 1974
Sidney Lumet's star-studded Christie adap steamed its way to six Oscar noms.

SCREAM 1996
Meta mayhem in a whodunit wearing slasher clothing.

BIRDMAN 2014
Michael Keaton's washed-up superhero actor hits Broadway in this hall-of-mirrors comedy-drama.

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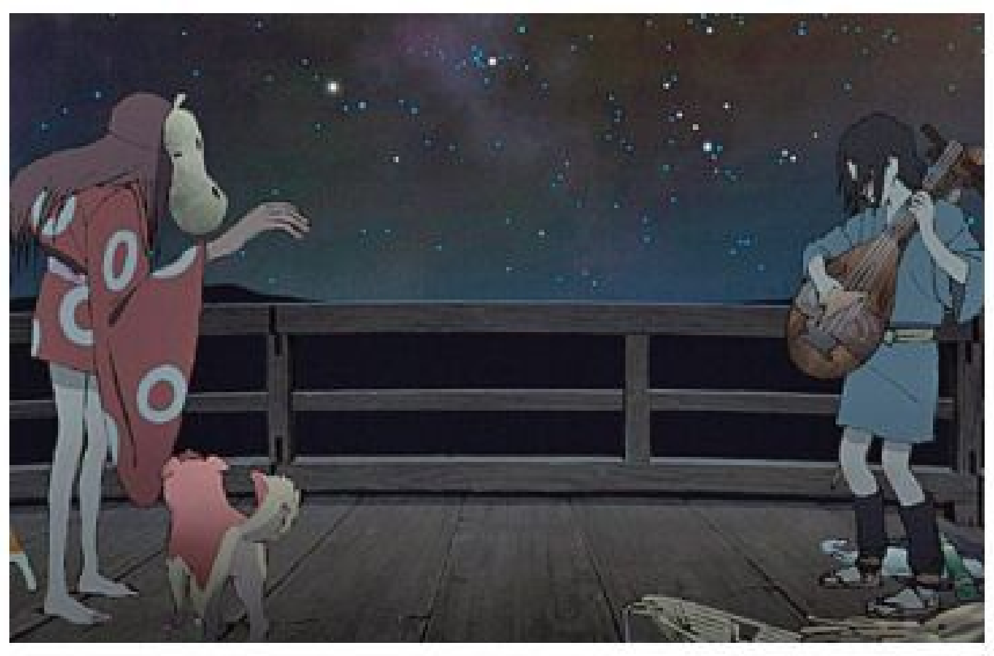
DISNEY, MUBI, PARAMOUNT, ANIME, SIGNATURE, DARTMOUTH

TORN HEARTS 15

★★★★☆ **OUT NOW** DIGITAL

The hoary old adage "never meet your heroes" proves particularly apt in Brea Grant's Nashville-set horror film. When two country singers (Abby Quinn, Alexxis Lemire) pitch up at the mansion of reclusive star Harper Dutch (a deliciously spiteful Katey Sagal), the duo find themselves on the receiving end of Dutch's malicious games. Simmering tensions boil over into very real consequences, however, in a cautionary tale of toxic ambition and faltering female solidarity. Authentic country tunes add well-studied local flavour to Grant's razor-sharp take on Southern gothic horror. **JOEL HARLEY**



INU-OH TBC

★★★☆☆ **OUT 28 SEPTEMBER** CINEMAS

Two social outcasts – a blind biwa priest and a masked noh dancer – are rejuvenated as a performing duo in 14th-century Japan. As their spectacular shows cause a sensation, however, the shogun plots a violent end to their act. Masaaki Yuasa's dazzling rock opera is one of the most visually distinctive animes in years. Yet the director seems as enamoured with his outsider artists as their audience is: the middle act lapses into proggy indulgence, leaving the finale too rushed to generate the kind of emotional impact that we were hoping for. **CHRIS SCHILLING**

WHEN THE SCREAMING STARTS TBC

★★★☆☆ **OUT 26 SEPTEMBER** DIGITAL

A filmmaker (Jared Rogers) thinks he's found the perfect subject for his latest doc when he falls in with an aspiring serial killer (co-writer Ed Hartland). However, as the would-be murderer assembles a Manson-esque family, the dysfunctional group proves more prone to socially awkward in-fighting than racking up bodies. Part cringe-com, part found-footage piece, director Conor Boru's horror-comedy meshes influences ranging from *Man Bites Dog* to *The Office* without summoning the right satirical edge. **TIM COLEMAN**

THE ANTS AND THE GRASSHOPPER 12A

★★★☆☆ **OUT 23 SEPTEMBER** CINEMAS

Co-directed by Raj Patel and Zak Piper, and 10 years in the making, this is a climate-change documentary with a difference: its narrator Anita Chitaya is a community activist and organic farmer from the Global South. Travelling from her drought-ridden Malawian village to the USA, she is determined to persuade American farmers that the climate emergency is ruining lives around the world. Providing its own variation on the titular Aesop's fable, the film serves as a call to action on individual, collective and international levels. **TOM DAWSON**

ONE SECOND TBC

Reel love...

★★★★☆ **OUT 16 SEPTEMBER** MUBI

A bittersweet fable from veteran Chinese Fifth Generation filmmaker Zhang Yimou, *One Second* has endured de facto state censorship. The director reportedly had to both re-edit and reshoot material in order to gain the necessary permission for a domestic and international release, yet this new version still presents a far from uncritical vision of China's past.

Set in a remote northern province during the Cultural Revolution in the '70s, the film begins in mythical mode, with an unnamed protagonist (Zhang Yi) trekking across a vast desert landscape. An escapee from a prison camp, he's desperate to track down an official newsreel containing fleeting footage of his estranged teenage daughter. He soon encounters an orphaned girl (Liu Haocun), who has her own reasons for recycling reels of film, and a travelling cinema projectionist (Fan Wei), aka 'Mr. Movie', who is scheduled to screen the newsreel alongside propagandist war drama *Heroic Sons And Daughters*.

Zhang treats the mechanics of celluloid projection with quasi-religious reverence. The locals tenderly clean unspooled strips of film and hang them up to dry, and use a white sheet as a substitute screen, crowding together to watch the feature in a state of wonder. However, *One Second* never forgets how the life of the central character has been shattered by the Party's repressive regime, ending on a note of uncertainty. **TOM DAWSON**

THE VERDICT Blending the personal and the historical, Zhang fashions a spirited love-letter to analogue cinema.

BLACK MAIL 15

★★★☆☆ **OUT NOW** CINEMAS

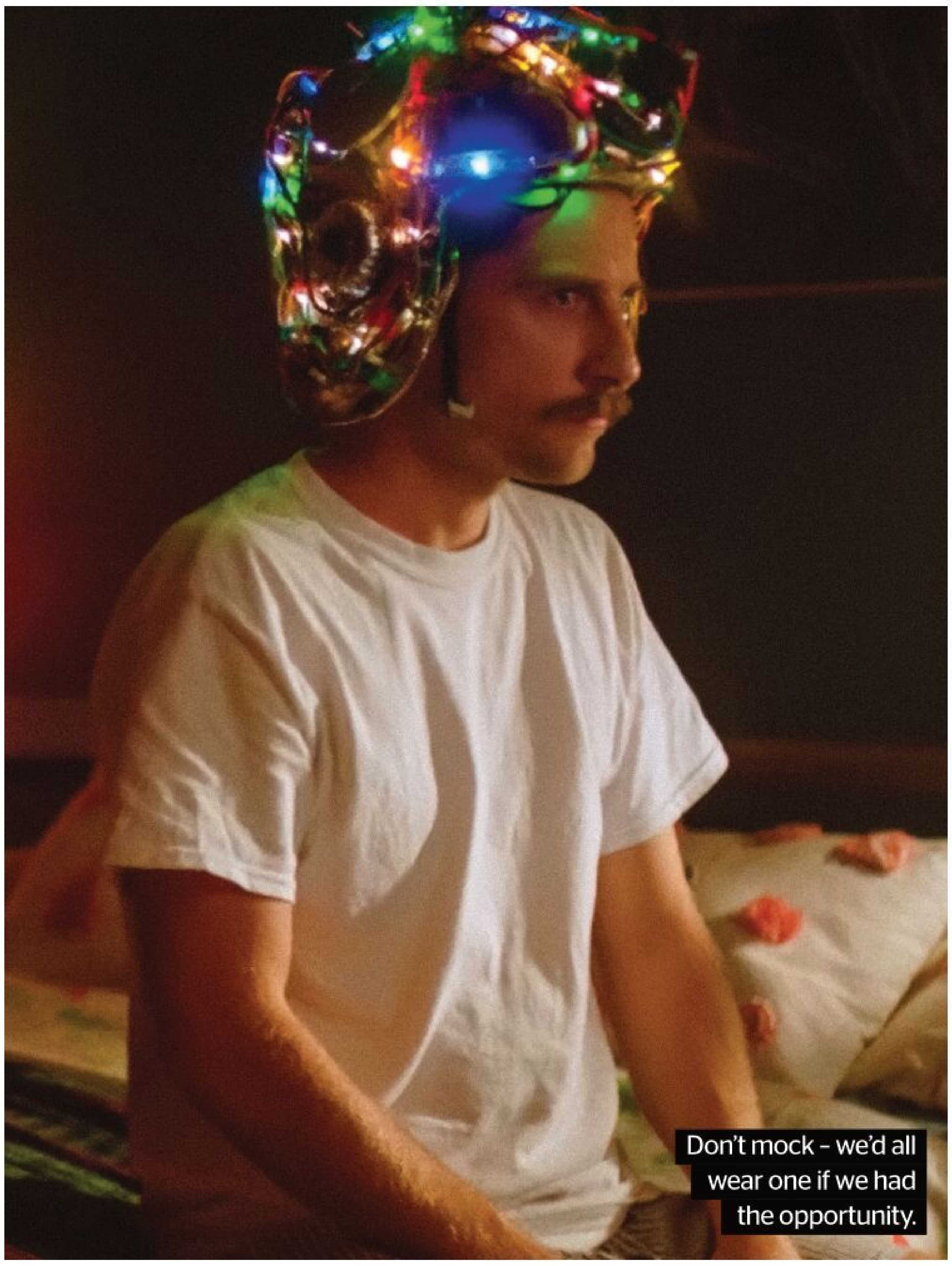
In a film based on real events, Nigerian director Obi Emelonye charts the story of a successful action-movie star (O.C. Ukeje) who becomes embroiled in an online blackmail scheme. Rather than roll over to the demands of the Russian mobsters who've used malware to film him watching porn, the actor chooses to track down his tormentors, putting a very particular set of skills to good use. The violence comes in shocking bursts, and Ukeje's lead performance is raw and real. Stilted co-stars and muggy cinematography betray the low budget, but this is a fresh, vibrant version of the cyber thriller. **JOEL HARLEY**

IN FROM THE SIDE 15

★★★★☆ **OUT 16 SEPTEMBER**

CINEMAS

Despite a background in visual effects, director Matt Carter delivers an understated drama as his impressive feature-length debut – one that he also co-wrote, edited and scored. The result, which explores an affair between two male players in a gay rugby league, is fraught with both tenderness and tension. Exploring how deception and acts of betrayal can ripple through an all-important team dynamic, the film offers a compellingly intimate – rather than salacious – view of romantic complications, even if the final act races too fast to the goal line. **MATT LOOKER**



Don't mock – we'd all wear one if we had the opportunity.

STRAWBERRY MANSION 12A

Yield of dreams...

★★★★☆ **OUT 16 SEPTEMBER** CINEMAS, DIGITAL

Got room in your life for another free-associative, tax-based fantasy after *Everything Everywhere All At Once*? Then try this sweet, strange and psychedelic romance from directors Kentucker Audley and Albert Birney, whose previous film, *Sylvio*, was a deadpan comedy about a sensitive gorilla turned viral sensation.

A similarly mild-mannered chap, *Strawberry Mansion*'s James (Audley) is a near-future taxman whose job involves auditing people's dreams. Tasked to assess ageing artist and "atmosphere creator" Arabella's (Penny Fuller) nocturnal subconscious, he finds that she has archived her dreams on old-school VHS. As James investigates the tapes, the line between dream/reality blurs – and he falls for the young Arabella (Grace Glowicki).

Like Charlie Kaufman in Oz, ensuing events elegantly mix DIY Day-Glo effects with head-trip satire and heart. As James attempts to save Arabella's dreams from her no-good son's evil intentions, Audley and Birney navigate her surreal inner worlds with care, tracing slender strands of detail between waking/dream realms. If the storytelling seems tenuous, plentiful compensations range from delirious playground-Lynch images to ideas about the right to imagine freely. With Dan Deacon's dexterous score as the lo-fi cherry on top, the result is a candy-coloured confection with a tender core: even when it bewilders, *Strawberry Mansion* beguiles in all the right places. **KEVIN HARLEY**

THE VERDICT Homemade and heartfelt, this indie reverie is a slight but supple valentine to the imagination.

CONTROL 15

★★★☆☆ **OUT 26 SEPTEMBER**

DIGITAL

It's often said that mothers will do anything to protect their children, and director James Mark's sci-fi thriller tests the premise. Eileen (a committed Sara Mitich) wakes up in a cell. She soon discovers that she is being held captive by a sinister organisation that threatens to kill her daughter unless she completes a series of tests. But the tests slowly unlock latent abilities in Eileen that her captors could never have anticipated. As with many high-concept thrillers, the landing isn't quite as interesting as the set-up, but there's fun to be had as Eileen's untapped skill set manifests itself. **LEILA LATIF**

IT IS IN US ALL 15

★★★★☆ **OUT 23 SEPTEMBER**

CINEMAS

The debut feature film from actor-turned-director Antonia Campbell-Hughes follows the fallout of a car accident in which intense Hamish (Cosmo Jarvis) encounters creepy teen Evan (Rhys Mannion). Between Hamish's mangled arm and the sexually charged dynamics, there's a Cronenbergian air to this bleak Donegal-set thriller. The lead actors simmer at each other with an almost menacing air of sexual tension, while Campbell-Hughes pops up in a brief but memorable supporting role. Proof that effective body horror doesn't necessarily need lashings of gore. **JOEL HARLEY**

BULLDOG, EVRIT FILMS, VERVE, SIGNATURE, BLUE FINCH, KALEIDOSCOPE, SHUDDER, MUNRO, ANTI-WORLDS, LIONSGATE

THE TUBULAR BELLS 50TH ANNIVERSARY TOUR E

★★☆☆☆ **OUT 22 SEPTEMBER**

CINEMAS

Mike Oldfield's *Tubular Bells* album (1973) famously gave *The Exorcist* its insidious theme. Non-demonic feats of physical contortion accompany the music in this misshapen film of a live reinterpretation, shot in London. With Oldfield absent, centre stage is taken by Circa, a dance troupe whose gymnastic dexterity interprets the slick, if somewhat drab, nine-piece band's rearrangement. It's an odd pairing, and it's often hard to see what Circa's acrobatic spectacle adds to Oldfield's acid-prog inner voyage. **KEVIN HARLEY**

WHO INVITED THEM TBC

★★★☆☆ **OUT NOW** SHUDDER

At the heart of every home-invasion movie is a very middle-aged source of dread: house guests who won't leave. In the wake of their housewarming party, a repressed couple (Ryan Hansen, Melissa Tang) befriend their charming but sinister neighbours (Perry Mattfeld, Timothy Granaderos). As unvoiced frustrations come to the fore, the funny games begin. Despite a strong start, writer-director Duncan Birmingham's darkly humorous horror film gradually wears out its welcome, as well-observed sniping submits to a predictable descent into duct tape, violence and sneery monologues. **JOEL HARLEY**

LOVE AROUND THE WORLD TBC

★★★★☆ **OUT 30 SEPTEMBER**

CINEMAS

Newly married filmmakers Andela and Davor Rostuhar spent their honeymoon on a year-long tour of the world, interviewing couples of every creed and colour to explore whether human experiences of love are universal. As this documentary takes in such diverse topics as love matches, arranged marriages, elopement, polyamory, infidelity, forgiveness, children and death, what could have been saccharine is instead deeply touching. The result is a delicately assembled mosaic of intimacy, hinged on the mystery of what it means to be connected to another person. **TIM COLEMAN**

BLOODY ORANGES TBC

★★☆☆☆ **OUT 16 SEPTEMBER**

CINEMAS, DIGITAL

An elderly couple enter a dance competition in a last-ditch attempt to clear debts; a teenage girl prepares to lose her virginity; a duplicitous finance minister has a night to forget. Jean-Christophe Meurisse's blackly comic portmanteau piece veers from talky tedium to shallow provocation, with little new to say about social inequality in present-day France. Still, amid the smugness and cynicism, individual performances leave a mark: in particular, Lilith Grasmug gives a fearless display of resourcefulness as a young woman determined not to become a victim. **CHRIS SCHILLING**

CLERKS III 15

Fan-service industry...

★★★☆☆ **OUT 16 SEPTEMBER** CINEMAS

An encyclopaedic knowledge of Kevin Smith's entire multi-channel brand is required to fully appreciate all the nods, recreations and cameos in the latest instalment of his View Askewniverse. But, while the once-sharp dialogue is now somewhat hackneyed, Smith has at least become adept at writing potent emotional beats, and at wringing surprisingly committed performances from his inexperienced cast.

Taking a cue from his own recent brush with death, Smith goes full-meta-circle in this continuation of the *Clerks* story, which sees Randal (Jeff Anderson) suffer a heart attack and subsequently decide to make a legacy-defining movie. That movie turns out to be the original 1994 *Clerks* film, and Smith's focus on bringing back all the original cast to repeat scenes from his debut feels largely self-indulgent. However, a parallel plot, in which Dante (Brian O'Halloran) wrestles with his own life-changing experience, putting pressure on his friendship with Randal, thankfully delivers character moments to invest in beyond all the fan service.

Fan service is, however, the point. Smith has long known how to appease his legion of devotees, and this trilogy closer will be welcomed by those happy to just spot Easter eggs throughout. It's hard to shake the impression, though, that the one fan Kevin Smith is really trying to please is Kevin Smith. **MATT LOOKER**

THE VERDICT For hardcore Smith fans only, but with some well-handled emotion beyond the usual snootchie bootchies.

At times *Clerks III* is so meta that we're practically in the movie alongside the talent.

HOT SEAT 15

★★☆☆☆ **OUT NOW** DVD, DIGITAL

This daft DTV potboiler, directed by James Cullen Bressack, stars Kevin Dillon as an IT worker who is forced to use his prodigious computer skills to siphon millions from a bank when an anonymous criminal rigs his office chair with a bomb. While there's an initially endearing stupidity to the script's *Speed*-meets-*Hackers* setup, it quickly fizzles out. If nothing else, *Hot Seat* proves once again that geeky technobabble ("It'll look like a standard DDoS attack!") and repetitive shots of fingers bashing at keyboards are anathema to generating tension and keeping viewers engaged. **ANTON VAN BEEK**

SAMARITAN 15

★☆☆☆☆ **OUT NOW** PRIME VIDEO

Sylvester Stallone fails to deliver the Rocky-style comeback hoped for in *Overlord* director Julius Avery's dour superhero variation. Sly brings a familiar world-weary pathos to retired former hero the Samaritan, thought to have perished, who emerges from hiding when his tearaway young neighbour (Javon Walton) falls in with Pilou Asbæk's gang leader. Asbæk's assemblage of a small army with one rabble-rousing speech typifies the sloppy plotting here, and with the action and pacing similarly undercooked, *Samaritan*'s waste of talent won't give Marvel or DC sleepless nights. **CHRIS SCHILLING**

We're still sceptical a creature exists that Elba wouldn't keep his cool in front of.

BEAST 15

Jaws of the jungle...

★★★☆☆ **OUT NOW** CINEMAS

"It's the law of the jungle," remarks Sharlto Copley's game-reserve warden. "It's only the lion that matters out here." True enough, as *Beast* pits a family against a relentless lion out to protect its own.

Idris Elba stars as Dr. Nate Samuels, a widower who takes his daughters Meredith (Iyana Halley) and Norah (Leah Jeffries) to visit the beautiful African savanna where their late mother once took captivating photos. The problem is, poachers have already agitated the pride. And when one lion goes ballistic and kills whoever is unlucky enough to cross its path, Nate is forced to do anything he can to evade the creature's considerable claws.

Directed by Baltasar Kormákur, something of a survival-movie specialist after *Everest* (2015) and *Adrift* (2018), *Beast*'s strong point is its CG-designed lion; scenes of the creature attacking the Samuels' jeep are truly spectacular. It's also heartening to see Elba play a more vulnerable character than usual. Nate is no action hero, and there are moments when he is at his wits' end: "I don't know what to do," he mutters.

Unfortunately, with the poacher subplot left underdeveloped, the final confrontation takes a turn for the silly, throwing out much of the good work that preceded it. A shame, as *Beast* had the makings of a jungle classic. **JAMES MOTTRAM**

THE VERDICT Elba is watchable, the CG lion roars, but it's a little daft in the final reckoning.

JUNIPER TBC

★★★☆☆ **OUT 23 SEPT** CINEMAS

With shades of Hal Ashby's *Harold And Maude*, New Zealand director Matthew J. Saville's debut feature explores the relationship between suicidal teenager Sam (George Ferrier), grieving for the recent loss of his mother, and his grandmother Ruth (Charlotte Rampling). Alcoholic and acid-tongued, Ruth is a former war photographer whose broken leg confines her to a wheelchair. Set against a verdant North Island backdrop, the drama offers few narrative surprises, but Rampling is typically impressive at conveying a confrontational character's mixture of steeliness and emotional vulnerability. **TOM DAWSON**

I CAME BY 15

★★★★☆ **OUT NOW** CINEMAS, NETFLIX

Director Babak Anvari (*Under The Shadow*) flaunts a knack for suspense with his old-school Hitchcockian thriller. George MacKay and Percelle Ascott play graffiti artists who break into the homes of London's elite to "tag" them, only to discover a horrifying secret in a former judge's (Hugh Bonneville) house. The twists come thick and fast yet never land as betrayals, and classy direction ensures the brutalities never succumb to empty violence. With a bone-chilling turn from Bonneville, Anvari's twisted tale will be Friday-night catnip for genre fans. **LEILA LATIF**

SIGNATURE, PARKLAND, AMAZON/MGM, UNIVERSAL, NETFLIX, PARK CIRCUS, MIRAMAX, SONY.

JACKIE BROWN 15

Only getting better with age...

1997 ★★★★★ **OUT 16 SEPT** CINEMAS

It's good but not *as* good,' was the timbre of the reviews when Quentin Tarantino's third movie dropped in 1997, with critics using words such as "measured" and "mature" as code for 'not as much fun'. The things that made *Reservoir Dogs* and *Pulp Fiction* such adrenalin shots to the heart – suited-and-booted crims, rat-a-tat dialogue, explosive violence, midnight-black humour – were all toned down in QT's blaxploitation-leaning adaptation of Elmore Leonard's *Rum Punch*. In their place was… a middle-aged love story?

Viewed now, on its 25th anniversary, *Jackie Brown* is arguably Tarantino's finest. It's the tale of flight attendant Jackie (Pam Grier), arrested for smuggling by FBI man Ray Nicolette (Michael Keaton) and strong-armed into setting up drug dealer Ordell Robbie (Samuel L. Jackson). Also key are bail bondsman Max Cherry (Robert Forster), Ordell's pothead girlfriend Melanie (Bridget Fonda) and his former cellmate Louis (Robert De Niro).

The plot is full of dangerous double-crossings and possesses a clockwork precision, but the film is loose and unhurried as Tarantino focuses on motive and mood. He invests greatly in the gradual blooming of the romance between Jackie and Max (Grier and Forster are sensational), and so poignant are the results, the films that followed felt like a regression. At least until *Once Upon A Time… In Hollywood* showcased some of the same, yes, maturity. **JAMIE GRAHAM**

THE VERDICT When you absolutely, positively have to choose one mother**cking QT movie, accept no substitute.

Don't judge her on first impressions…

BRAM STOKER'S DRACULA 18

Bloody valentine...

1992 ★★★★☆ **OUT 7 OCT** CINEMAS **10 OCT** 4K

EXTRAS ★★★★☆ Commentaries, Introduction, Featurettes, Making Of, Interviews, Music video, Deleted/extended scenes

Between *The Godfather Part III* and the age-fixated *Jack*, Francis Ford Coppola hit his fifties fretting. Was he getting old, losing his touch? If so, Winona Ryder presented an answer: James V. Hart's *Dracula* script, which – echoing Hart's forever-young *Hook*, plus blood – offered a vicarious chance to sip from the wine of youth again.

Energised by the script's "passion and eroticism", Coppola tore Bram Stoker's epistolary novel from horror formulae, reimagining it as lush Gothic melodrama framed by bad Vlad's romantic tragedy. Scary? No, but its cup of subtext and sumptuous spectacle overflows with pleasures.

Honouring Stoker's polyphonic prose, Coppola draws delicious, character-rich turns from Anthony Hopkins, Tom Waits and Gary Oldman, whose love-lorn vamp (iffy accent aside) oozes slippery charisma. Less successful, Keanu Reeves' gormless Jonathan Harker unwittingly suggests *Bill & Ted's Exsanguinated Adventure*.

Coppola's allusions are more vintage. His *Dracula* is too elaborate, too diffuse for focused chills, but it succeeds as a smitten valentine to movie masters from Dreyer to Kurosawa. Between Eiko Ishioka's costumes, Wojciech Kilar's luxurious score and more in-camera effects than you can shake a stake at, the delight in detail intoxicates: three decades on, it serves fresh blood to sup on for every revisit. **KEVIN HARLEY**

THE VERDICT The accents are dodgy, scares scarce, but Coppola's vamp romance remains a sensory feast.

Nice coat, shame about the accent.

THE PIANO 15

Key of life...

1993 ★★★★★ **OUT NOW** 4K UHD

EXTRAS ★★★☆☆ Featurettes, Making Of, Interview

Vast blue-grey skies, indistinguishable from the sea and sand, are restored to 4K magnificence for this re-release of Jane Campion's Cannes-winning classic. As beguiling as ever almost 30 years on, *The Piano* remains enigmatic and open to interpretation, its immense images and interpersonal intimacies burrowing into your brain for the long haul.

At the centre is Ada (Holly Hunter), a mute single mother arriving in colonial New Zealand with her young daughter (Anna Paquin) for an arranged marriage with frontiersman Alisdair Stewart (Sam Neill), who refuses to lug her treasured piano from the beach. Instead, illiterate immigrant George Baines (Harvey Keitel) retrieves it, offering its return in exchange for erotic favours of increasing intensity.

The curious set-up is immensely compelling, the grand location specific and universal. Today you'd expect the Maori characters to have more prominent voices; here, they're a background contrast to the Victorian social strictures Ada collides with. What endures over all is Hunter's indelible performance, duly rewarded at the Oscars (Paquin was also victorious as the second-youngest winner ever). From fierce looks to the impassioned playing of Michael Nyman's heart-piercing music, Hunter – like the film – speaks volumes that reward revisits.

MATT MAYTUM

THE VERDICT This restoration of Campion's masterpiece will have you swooning anew at its timeless scope.

Both Hunter and Paquin earned Academy Awards for their startling performances.

DESIRE/ALL MY GOOD COUNTRYMEN 12

1958/1969 ★★★★☆ **OUT NOW** BD

EXTRAS ★★★★☆ Commentary, Shorts, Featurette, Booklet

A pair of restored gems from Czech filmmaker Vojtch Jasný. The lyrically photographed *Desire* tells four stories, each unfolding over a different season in the Moravian countryside and illustrating the cycles of human existence. Even more impressive is *All My Good Countrymen*, banned by the authorities in 1969. An epic account of everyday lives in a farming village over several decades, it charts how Communist dogma impacts upon its characters, while affirming nature's transcendent power. Plentiful extras. **TOM DAWSON**

UMBERTO D. PG

1952 ★★★★★ **OUT NOW** BD

EXTRAS ★★★☆☆ Documentary, Interview, Trailer, Booklet

A favourite of its writer-director Vittorio De Sica, this Italian neorealist masterpiece about an elderly man trying to raise the money needed to avoid being evicted makes a second appearance on UK Blu-ray. Seemingly derived from an alternate HD source than the earlier disc (not necessarily better or worse, just different in its strengths and weaknesses), Criterion's package also sports completely different extras – although still not the tissues needed to make it through the film's heart-wrenching climax. **ANTON VAN BEEK**

DR. NO PG

1962 ★★★☆☆ **OUT 3 OCTOBER** BD

EXTRAS ★★★★☆ Commentary, Featurettes, Documentary, Booklet, Lobby cards

"We can do better," wrote a United Artists executive when faced with the prospect of virtual unknown Sean Connery taking the lead in the first James Bond adventure. Sixty years on, this extras-stuffed re-release is a collectible riposte to that man's lack of foresight, even if the film itself lacks the polish and vim of its numerous successors. Modern viewers might also balk at its unthinking racism and sadism. In Ursula Andress' bikini-clad emergence from the ocean, however, it has an indelible image for the ages. **NEIL SMITH**

FATAL ATTRACTION 18

1987 ★★★★☆ **OUT NOW** BD

EXTRAS ★★★☆☆ Commentary, Interview, Alternate ending

Now given the 4K treatment, Adrian Lyne's yuppie infidelity thriller, made in the thick of the Aids crisis, remains one of the high points of '80s Hollywood. Michael Douglas is terrific as Dan Gallagher, the smug lawyer who throws his perfect East Coast life away for a steamy weekend fling with Glenn Close's troubled singleton. Quite apart from giving us the term "bunny boiler", Lyne's film motors like a runaway train, building to an operatic crescendo as Gallagher's chickens violently come home to roost. Sensational. **JAMES MOTTRAM**

STUDIOCANAL, SECOND RUN, SONY/CRITERION, MGM, PARAMOUNT, WARNER BROS, EUREKA!

BUCK AND THE PREACHER TBC

1972 ★★★★★

OUT 26 SEPTEMBER BD

EXTRAS ★★★★☆ Featurettes, Essay

Reclaiming the western for those it had previously underserved, Sidney Poitier's directorial debut sees him star as Buck alongside Harry Belafonte (the preacher) and Ruby Dee (Buck's wife). A pioneering piece of Black cinema offering an ahead-of-its-time portrayal of Native Americans, it's also rollicking fun: an exciting, frequently hilarious buddy comedy that subverts and exceeds almost every expectation. Extras include behind-the-scenes footage, scholarly analysis and a new interview with Belafonte's daughter Gina. **LEILA LATIF**

HEARTS AND MINDS 15

1974 ★★★★☆

OUT 26 SEPTEMBER BD

EXTRAS ★★★☆☆ Commentary, Outtakes, Essay

Impartiality takes a back seat in Peter Davis' justifiably angry documentary about the Vietnam War. While the 1974 film looks at the arguments for and against the invasion, it makes no effort to hide which side it's on, contrasting horrifying footage of the war's cost on the Vietnamese with insulting, often unashamedly racist, proclamations from those supporting the conflict. Subtle it is not, but nor is it wrong. As former Defence Department aide Daniel Ellsberg states, "We weren't on the wrong side. We are the wrong side." **ANTON VAN BEEK**

EDGE OF TOMORROW 12

2014 ★★★★★ **OUT NOW** 4K

EXTRAS ★★★☆☆ Featurettes, Interview, Deleted scenes

Sent to war-torn France to repel invading aliens, cowardly Major Cage (Tom Cruise) is killed almost immediately, only to wake up earlier that same day. Essentially *Groundhog Day* remixed as a sci-fi *Saving Private Ryan*, Doug Liman's overlooked actioner kicks ass on all fronts, from Emily Blunt's super-soldier to a script co-written by Christopher McQuarrie – and Cruise excels as a man who gradually finds the courage to put others first. This 4K re-release comes with limited extras that focus on the impressive battle scenes. **TIM COLEMAN**

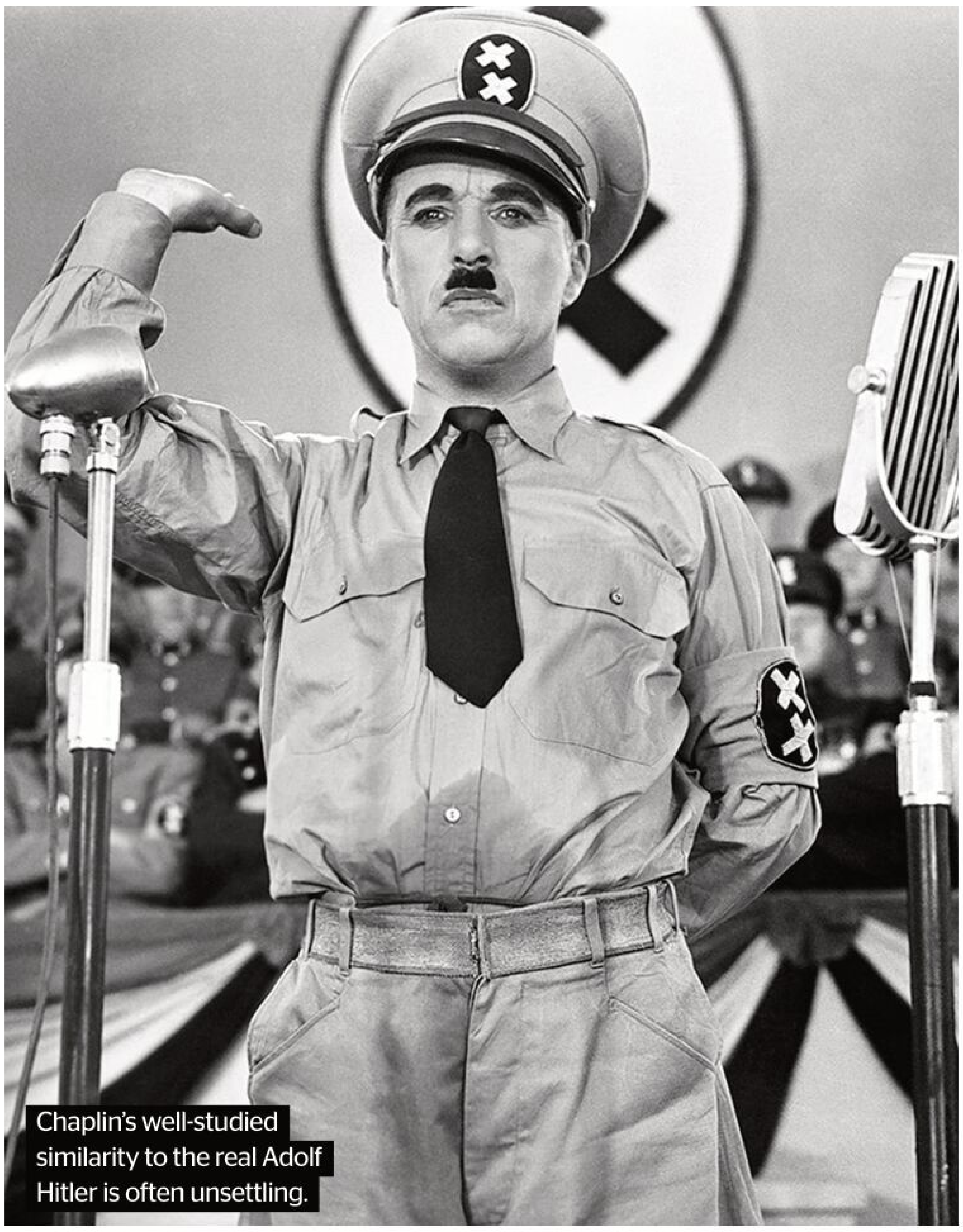
POLICE STORY 3: SUPERCOP 15

1992 ★★★☆☆

OUT 26 SEPTEMBER BD

EXTRAS ★★★★★ Commentaries, Alternate cut, Featurettes, Interviews, Outtakes, Booklet

Jackie Chan is joined by the fantastic Michelle Yeoh in this third *Police Story*, which sees his titular Hong Kong Supercop out of his element as he goes undercover in mainland China. If fewer fight scenes mean martial-arts fans may come away disappointed, there's still plenty of hair-raising onscreen action to savour – most notably a stunt-tastic finale that sees Chan dangling hundreds of feet up beneath a helicopter and Yeoh jumping a motorbike onto a moving train. **ANTON VAN BEEK**



Chaplin's well-studied similarity to the real Adolf Hitler is often unsettling.

THE GREAT DICTATOR 12

Tears of a clown...

1940 ★★★★★ **OUT 26 SEPTEMBER** BD

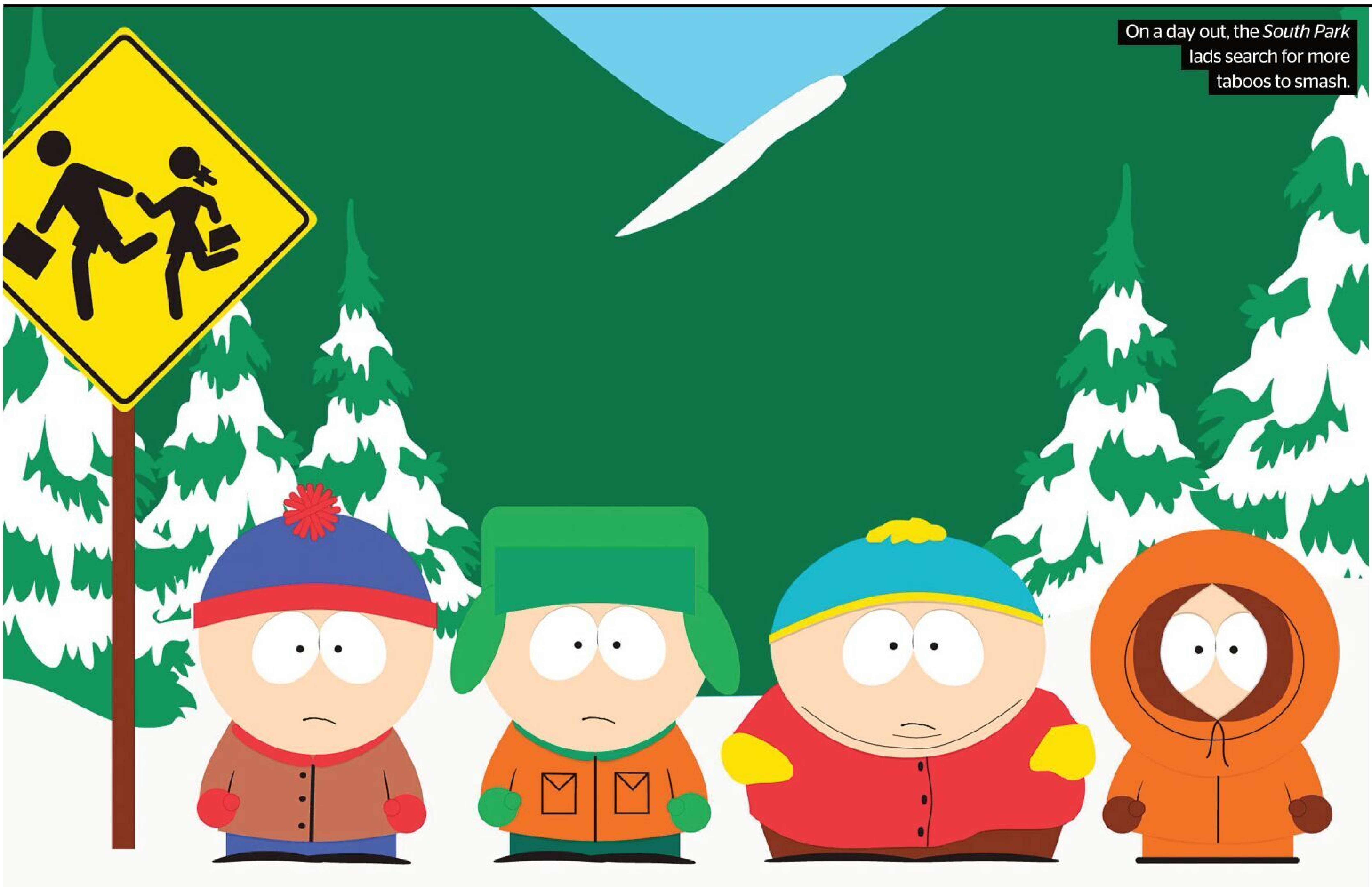
EXTRAS ★★★★☆ Commentary, Documentary, Featurette, Visual essays, On-set footage, Silent film extracts, Essay

"I'm sorry, but I don't want to be an emperor… I don't want to rule or conquer anyone. I should like to help everyone, if possible," begins the climactic monologue from Charlie Chaplin's first true talkie. While the scene has Chaplin's Jewish barber masquerading as lookalike fascist dictator Adenoid Hynkel, it's clearly a direct address from the star himself, a plea for world peace and a condemnation of Nazi Germany's warmongering.

It seems almost fated that Chaplin would wind up playing Hitler on the silver screen. Beyond the obvious visual similarities, the two were arguably the most famous men on the planet at the time, and had even been born within a few days of each other. Not that *The Great Dictator* was the first Hollywood production to openly mock the Führer: The Three Stooges beat him to the punch by several months with their 1940 short *You Nazty Spy!* However, Chaplin's film is the more effective, affecting and amusing piece of satire by far.

The fact that *The Great Dictator* is now receiving its third UK Blu-ray release in a little over 12 years speaks to how well regarded the film remains. Thankfully, an expanded roster of extras (including the superb documentary *The Tramp And The Dictator*) makes this a particularly welcome and worthwhile revisit. **ANTON VAN BEEK**

THE VERDICT Chaplin's masterpiece unleashes a comedic blitzkrieg on Adolf Hitler, to powerful and poignant effect.



On a day out, the *South Park* lads search for more taboos to smash.

CLASSIC TV

SOUTH PARK

Hello there, potty-mouthed children...

1997-PRESENT AVAILABLE ON DVD, BD, DIGITAL, PARAMOUNT+

"We made three people cry. They kept saying that it's inappropriate for children to say those kinds of things," recalls producer Brian Graden of a disastrous pre-release focus-group screening of *South Park*'s pilot episode. But when the cartoon – created by Trey Parker and Matt Stone – made its TV debut on 13 August 1997, nobody could have predicted what would happen next...

At the time, Comedy Central was a fairly niche cable channel. Graden hoped that, if they were lucky, maybe they'd pick up around 200,000 viewers. Instead, 980,000 viewers tuned in to watch the debut episode. The number kept growing each episode; by the time the season-ending 'Cartman's Mom Is A Dirty Slut' aired on 25 February 1998, viewing figures had rocketed to over 6.4 million. And in 1999, it spawned a box-office hit - and Oscar nominee - in the form of *South Park: Bigger, Longer & Uncut*.

Regardless of the various controversies that have erupted around *South Park* over the years, and no matter how much it continues to push at the boundaries of good taste and take (generally well-deserved) shots at all manner of sacred cows, it's hard to remember exactly how revolutionary the show's first season really was. A cartoon aimed explicitly at adults, populated by foul-mouthed kids, which openly took potshots at famous celebrities? There was nothing like it on TV. "We grew up watching shitty sitcoms that were just so lifeless. And so it was definitely a reaction against that," recalls Stone.

Of course, if *South Park* were just gross-out gags and swearing kids, it's doubtful the show would have lasted long enough to have kicked off its 25th season this year. Beyond all of the offensiveness, however, *South Park* is also one of the sharpest – and easily the most media-savvy – satires in small-screen history. While it has a ton of fun mocking those in the public eye, it always saves its true ire for people devoted to their own self-interests. Nothing in the news is off the table, and the 'simplistic' animation style means the creators can respond to things quickly, ensuring *South Park* always feels topical.

While viewing figures have dropped over the decades, they're still healthy enough for Paramount Global to have recently entered into a six-year, $900m deal with Parker and Stone to make six more seasons of the show for Comedy Central along with 14 made-for-streaming movies for its Paramount+ platform. Presumably the only tears caused by *South Park* these days are sobs of joy from Parker and Stone's bank managers... **ANTON VAN BEEK**

A VERY SPECIAL EPISODE

'SCOTT TENORMAN MUST DIE', SEASON 5, 2001

Eric Cartman had always been an intolerant, manipulative, sociopath. In this landmark episode, however, he finally made the leap to full-on psychopath, taking revenge on a local bully by fooling him into eating a chilli made from the corpses of his murdered parents. Eat your heart out, Titus Andronicus!

PARAMOUNT

EXTRAS

TOY/COLLECTIBLE

AVATAR LEGO

OUT 1 OCTOBER

Before we get to *The Way Of Water*, let's tackle the building of brick sets. Pandora goes plastic with Toruk Makto & Tree Of Souls, which includes four minifigures including a foil-winged Toruk, a Direhorse and the sacred, Soul-ful centrepiece, with its funky pink foliage. Glows in the dark, too (handy for avoiding those late-night barefoot accidents). Other *Avatar* sets are also flying in soon; obtain 'em at lego.com.

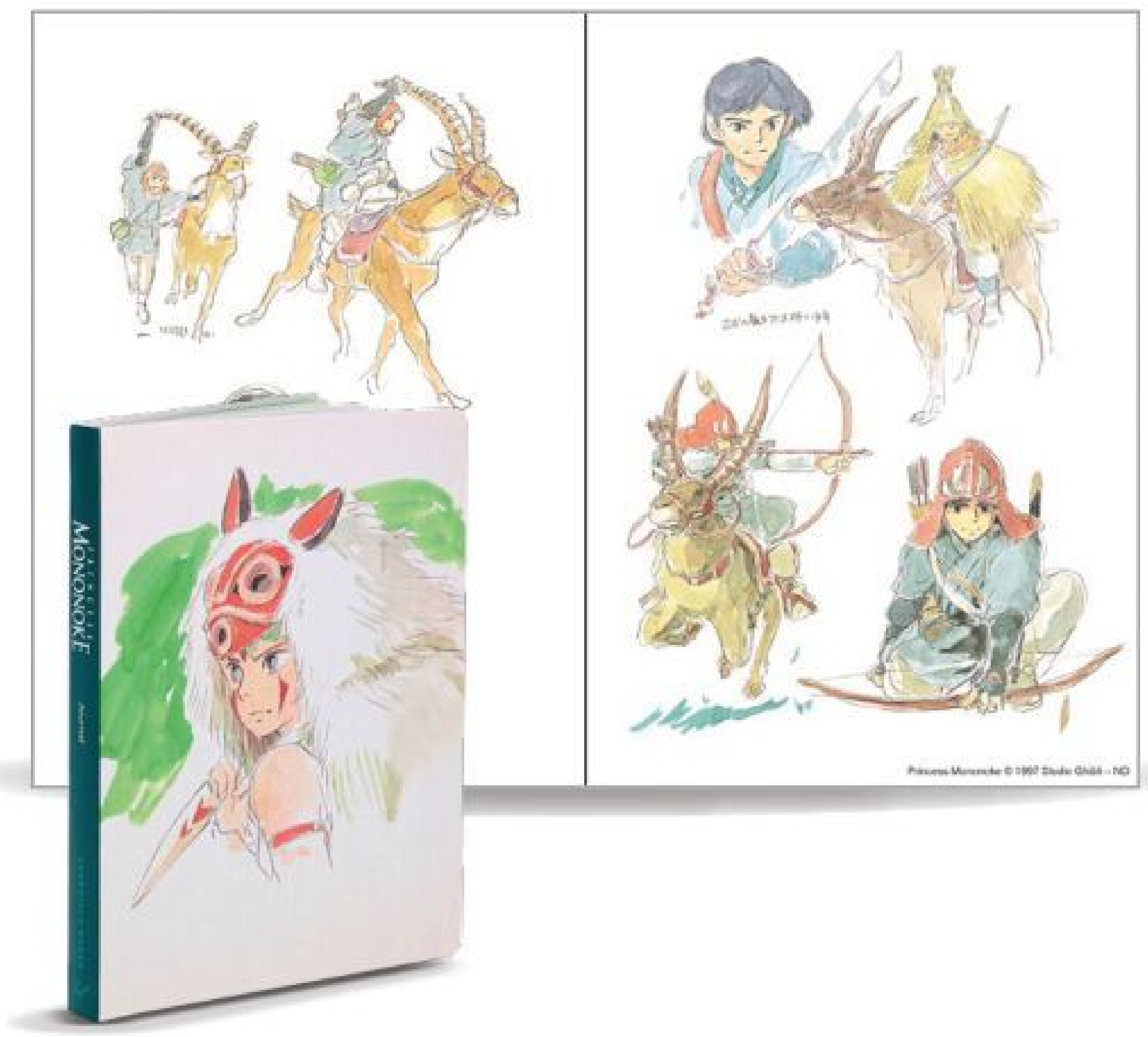
STRANGER THINGS

HOMEWARE

STRANGER THINGS VHS LOGO LIGHT

OUT NOW

Had a busy day, runnin' up that hill, runnin' up that road and so forth? Then it's time to relax with this officially licensed lamp, which'll turn frowns upside down (ahem) with its evocative red glow. The VHS stylings, meanwhile, are so uncanny that older purchasers will experience wistful memories of battered boxes, snarled-up tapes and endless *Police Academy* trailers. Powered by USB (included) or AAA batteries (nope). Available from multiple retailers, so go ahead and make a deal.



STATIONERY/COLLECTIBLE

STUDIO GHIBLI'S PRINCESS MONONOKE JOURNAL

OUT NOW

Inspired by Hayao Miyazaki's 1997 beloved fantasy epic, this is an item almost too lovely to sully, especially if, like *Extras*, your handwriting is messier than a maggoty boar-god. We'll just have to gaze instead at the five interior spreads of full-colour concept art and extensive spot illustrations. The flexi-bound paperback is 5 x 7in, containing 192 lined pages (and a ribbon marker); embark on a great journal at chroniclebooks.com.

MATTHEW LEYLAND

COLLECTIBLE

THE OFFICE LEGO

OUT 1 OCTOBER

To answer the biggest question first: yes, it comes with a stapler in (Lego) gelatine. There are also nods to other classic moments from the US sitcom, from Dwight's hidden weapons to Kevin's chilli 'incident'. Recreating Dunder Mifflin's Scranton branch in 1,164 pieces, it naturally includes Michael's office, which can be slid out for separate display (we're sure he'd like that). And not only are there 15 minifigures, you get Angela's cat Garbage too. Ready to splash out? Insert the show's signature line here, then head to lego.com.

LEGO, CHRONICLE, PRINCESS MONONOKE © 1997 STUDIO GHIBLI, PALADONE

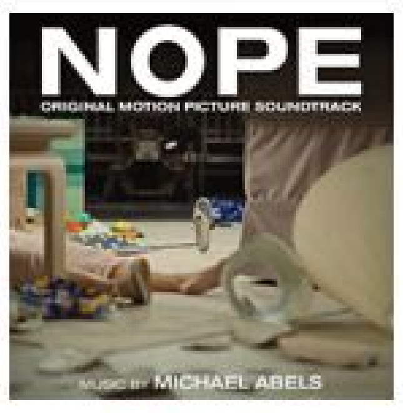
FRESH SPINS

From one close encounter to another...

PREY
MUSIC BY SARAH SCHACHNER
hulu

PREY
★★★★☆

Hired on the strength of her videogame scores, Sarah Schachner brings tensile feats of character, action, suspense and rough-hewn world-building to the *Predator* prequel. Macho rhythms and weaponised cellos herald the Yautja's arrival. For heroine Naru and her culture, Schachner summons emotion and rugged detail, aided by guests including Native American singer/flautist Robert Mirabal: when the two sonic worlds get into a ruck (see 'Horseback Ambush'), the effects are bracing.



NOPE
★★★★☆

If you can take the tonal whiplash, the soundtrack to Jordan Peele's sci-fi wrong-footer is an ingenious exercise in controlled misdirection. Symphonic grandeur and dissonant unease merge with wily western flourishes in Michael Abels' score; elsewhere, song choices range from '80s synth-pop to lounge, soul and chanson as the narrative demands, cohering by force of vision. As the end-stretch and Morricone-esque title track revel in bombast, *Nope* earns the right to swagger.

CLASSIC SOUNDTRACK

HAROLD FALTERMEYER

TEN OUTSIZED EARWORMS FROM THE SYNTH-POP HIGH-FLYER…

'TOP GUN ANTHEM' TOP GUN/
TOP GUN: MAVERICK (1986/2022)

Fletch's loss was Maverick's gain. German synth trailblazer Harold Faltermeyer – who turns 70 on 5 October – originally composed the opening bars of 'Anthem' for Chevy Chase's comedy thriller. Transferred to *Top Gun*, 'Anthem' embodies '80s high-concept heroism in swathes of pomp, melody and hair-metal guitar.

'AXEL F' BEVERLY HILLS COP (1984)

Under deadline pressure, Faltermeyer worked all night to craft a breakdancing "patchwork" of *Cop*'s score. Influenced by Herbie Hancock's 'Rockit', his frisky Roland synth-strumental made producers nervous. But it topped charts more than once – anyone remember Crazy Frog's version in 2005?

'BROADCAST ATTACK'
THE RUNNING MAN (1987)

With no director or producer on hand, Faltermeyer was left alone to score Arnie's (loose) Stephen King adaptation. Delivering dystopian mood music in a Brad Fiedel or John Carpenter/Alan Howarth vein, Faltermeyer hit a wicked stride with 'Broadcast Attack'.

'MEMORIES' TOP GUN (1986)

Not included in the original, score-lite soundtrack release, this plaintive instrumental is pure aural Goose-bump fuel for *Gun*-watchers: essentially, Morricone meets Tangerine Dream in dreamy synth washes and chorales. Full score release, anyone?

'FLETCH THEME' FLETCH (1985)

The drum programming for *Fletch*'s cue was a happy accident: Faltermeyer recalled landing his rhythms one beat too late. Either way, he mirrors Chevy Chase's character impeccably with two buoyant synth lines, both earworm-y and irresistible.

'MIGHTY WINGS' TOP GUN (1986)

"Gentlemen, this is your first hop…" Composed by Faltermeyer, Cheap Trick's pop-metal belter summons all the '80s bombast a Simpson/Bruckheimer film could reasonably (and unreasonably) require. An instrumental reading accompanies the "pilot shit" set-piece.

'CAPTAIN FREEDOM'S WORKOUT'
THE RUNNING MAN (1987)

"Are you ready for pain?" An emblematic blast of limber '80s aerobicised cheese, Faltermeyer's bass-driven synth-funk workout – picture Axel Foley in the gym – ought to come with free leotards.

'STOLEN SECRETS' THIEF OF HEARTS (1984)

Faltermeyer was holidaying in the Bavarian Alps when producer Jerry Bruckheimer called with a job offer. The Giorgio Moroder protégé responded with his first full score: briskly melodic music with a Carpenter/Howarth pulse for a forgettable film.

'SHOOT OUT' BEVERLY HILLS COP (1984)

Even if the full score is harder to come by than drugs in coffee crates, 'Axel F''s B-side is widely available. With its nimble strut and funky synth-bass, 'Shoot Out' pops like Eddie Murphy's machine-gun patter.

'BUS CHASE/COCAINE'
TANGO & CASH (1989)

After his '80s synth-pop primacy, Faltermeyer closed his Hollywood career here. The buddy-cop film hasn't aged well but the opening cue's Prince-ly bass and gym-pumped percussion serves pure bottled nostalgia. "Let's do it…" **KEVIN HARLEY**

Pete 'Maverick' Mitchell is happy his F-14 Tomcat has a decent radio for all those top '80s tunes.

PARAMOUNT, 20TH CENTURY STUDIOS/BACK LOT MUSIC, WAXWORK RECORDS

"Don't be such a big head!"

GAMES

IMMORTALITY

Feels so reel...

★★★★★ **OUT NOW** ANDROID, IOS (VIA NETFLIX), PC, XBOX SERIES S/X

With 2015's BAFTA-winning *Her Story* and 2019 follow-up *Telling Lies*, writer/director Sam Barlow redefined the detective game, asking players to filter live-action video clips to solve a mystery.

Immortality deepens the cinema connection, presenting footage from the rehearsals and shooting of three films starring fictional actor Marissa Marcel. The big difference is how you explore these snippets: using an editing tool, you can target individual people and objects, with match cuts transporting you to a similar frame from another scene.

This unconventional investigating takes some getting used to. But this is no ordinary mystery. Barlow and his collaborators – including the screenwriters behind *Don't Look Now* and *Mr. Robot* – have concocted an enthralling narrative that confronts our relationship with everything from onscreen violence to industry misogyny.

Just as you're marvelling at its ingenuity and filmmaking craft, *Immortality* reveals it's been holding something in reserve: a dizzying revelation that turns everything on its head. A serious contender for 2022's best game. **CHRIS SCHILLING**

HINDSIGHT

★★★★☆

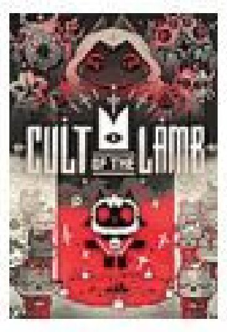
OUT NOW IOS, PC, SWITCH

Everyday objects become portals to the past in this melancholy tale of a fortysomething chef who returns home to box up her late mother's possessions. Items can open up paths to wistful snapshots – a metaphor for the way time grants us a fresh perspective on childhood memories. Nifty touches abound in these evocative vignettes (raindrops pooling on a stormy night lead to a glorious autumnal evening). Although a heavy-handed voiceover flattens any ambiguities, *Hindsight*'s heartfelt closing chapter is a tear-jerking triumph. **CHRIS SCHILLING**

CULT OF THE LAMB

★★★☆☆

OUT NOW PC, PS4/5, SWITCH, XBOX ONE/SERIES S/X



Rescued from slaughter by a mysterious figure, a sacrificial lamb must assemble their own cult of anthropomorphic followers in return. What follows is an unusual blend of dungeon-crawling action (in which this ovine leader sets out on crusades to kill rival cult leaders) and management simulator, where you tend to your flock's needs to ensure they keep faith with your doctrines. It's captivating at first, but your followers are a demanding bunch: you spend most of your time appeasing them. **CHRIS SCHILLING**

WE ARE OFK

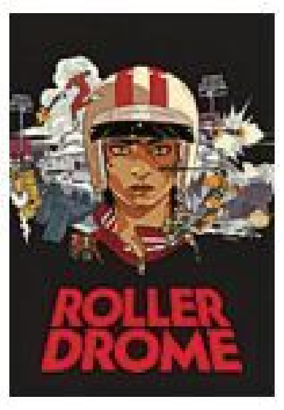
★★★☆☆

OUT NOW PC, PS4/5, SWITCH

Documenting the lives and loves of four young creatives in LA's music scene, this episodic adventure is a stylish treat. True, the player's involvement is often limited to choosing one of three responses – but *We Are OFK* deftly captures the staccato rhythms of modern communication, as characters pinball from heart-to-hearts to flirty text exchanges. The five indie-pop tracks on this 'interactive EP' suggest they'll make it big, even if the accompanying videos don't *quite* do the songs justice. **CHRIS SCHILLING**

2 MORE

Recent thumb-twiddlers...



ROLLERDROME

★★★☆☆

OUT NOW | PC, PS4, PS5

Developer Roll7's last dabble with future sports brought us the criminally overlooked *Laser League*; this violent cross between *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater* and *Rollerball* has the explosive spectacle to make it a bigger hit. Yet the action escalates too quickly: enemies require very specific tactics to take down, limiting creative play.

MIDNIGHT FIGHT EXPRESS

MIDNIGHT FIGHT EXPRESS

★★★☆☆

OUT NOW | PC, PS4, SWITCH, XBOX ONE/SERIES S/X

This isometric actioner was put together with the help of a motion-captured stuntman, and it shows in the superior choreography and bruising force of its hand-to-hand fights. As the scale grows ever more preposterous, however, it loses some of that early punch – though it's worth persevering with for a clutch of thrilling set-pieces.

MINSKY
Cino De Giorgio Entertainment
Dir. John DURICK
INT/DAY
41A

HALF MERMAID, ANNAPURNA INTERACTIVE, DEVOLVER DIGITAL, TEAM OFK, PRIVATE DIVISION, TAKE-TWO INTERACTIVE, HUMBLE GAMES

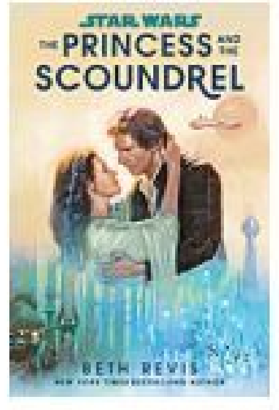
3 MORE

Stranger Things, Star Wars and Sunset Boulevard...

STRANGER THINGS: THE ULTIMATE POP-UP BOOK

★★★★☆

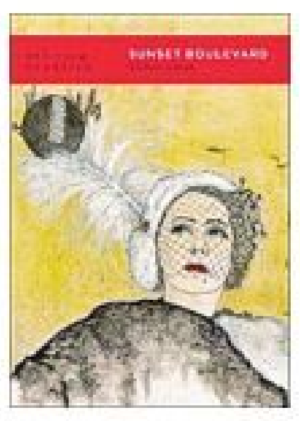
Seasons 1-3 retold across five spreads and 29 pops, precision-paper-engineered by Simon Arizpe and illustrated with warmth and terror by regular *ST* artist Kyle Lambert. There are surprises within surprises, though – perhaps the biggest is the £60 RRP (over £2 per pop!).



THE PRINCESS AND THE SCOUNDREL

★★★☆☆

Part romantic adventure, part marketing plug for Disney World's Galactic Starcruiser experience, Beth Revis' novel sends Han and Leia down the aisle and then on an (inevitably) incident-packed honeymoon. At its best, the bickering is *Episode V*-level hot.

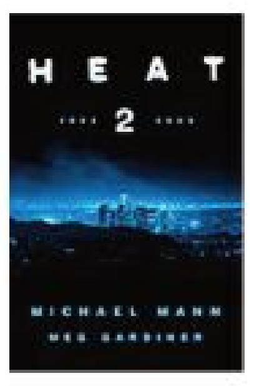


BFI FILM CLASSICS: SUNSET BOULEVARD

★★★★☆

Billy Wilder's indelible take on Hollywood's vicious dream machine is meticulously unpicked in Steven Cohan's BFI entry. Cohan faithfully combs through *Sunset*'s making, relation to film noir, and legacy, his clear-eyed prose showing why the film remains ever-ready for its close-up.

"What? We gotta do this all over again, but in the past? At our age?"



BOOKS

HEAT 2

★★★★★ **MICHAEL MANN, MEG GARDINER** HARPERCOLLINS

The prologue whizzes us through the events of *Heat* the motion picture: the stakeouts, the coffee meet, the takedown of the Far East National Bank at 444 South Flower Street in Los Angeles, and detective Vincent Hanna's killing of crew leader Neil McCauley at the foot of an LAX runway. Then we're in Koreatown one day later, with a wounded Chris Shiherlis desperate to escape before Hanna sniffs him out.

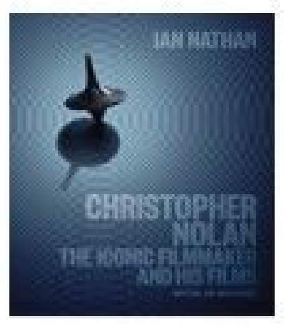
It's a claustrophobic, electric opening, but master filmmaker-turned-author Michael Mann and crime novelist Meg Gardiner have grand ambitions for *Heat 2*. Like Coppola's *The Godfather Part II*, this riveting tale is both prequel and sequel. In 1988, Hanna and McCauley unknowingly circle one another in Mann's hometown of Chicago. It's still a world of cops and robbers, but they're different men to those we meet in the 1995-set film. In 2000, meanwhile, the action migrates to Paraguay and Mexico as Shiherlis pivots to transnational digital crime.

With its tough, terse prose, wide canvas, granular plotting and unwavering authenticity earned through obsessive research, there's something of James Ellroy to this tour-de-force crime novel. Mann, apparently, knew much of the 1988 segment when he made *Heat* – he insists on detailing his characters' biographies – and this book will deepen your understanding of the movie. Let's now pray that Mann fulfils his desire to adapt *Heat 2* for the screen. **JAMIE GRAHAM**

CHRISTOPHER NOLAN: THE ICONIC FILMMAKER AND HIS WORK

★★★★☆

IAN NATHAN WHITE LION

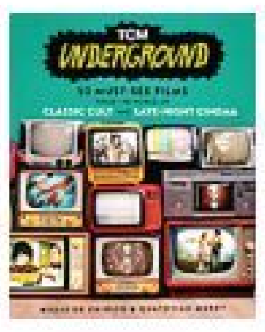


This book takes a comprehensive look at the films of Nolan, from his earliest feature (*Following*, 1998), to his incoming *Oppenheimer*. Recurring themes are thoroughly interrogated, charting his evolution as a filmmaker. Nolan has always given his audiences plenty to unpack, and this book is exhaustive in breaking down the magic. High-quality stills and behind-the-scenes pictures add handsome illustrations. **JOEL HARLEY**

TCM UNDERGROUND: 50 MUST-SEE FILMS FROM THE WORLD OF CLASSIC CULT AND LATE-NIGHT CINEMA

★★★★☆

MILLIE DE CHIRICO, QUATOYIAH MURRY RUNNING PRESS

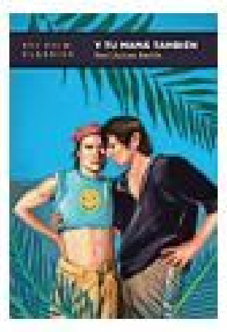


What's the definition of a cult movie? According to Patton Oswalt's foreword, it's when "we dig on that shit over and over again": something the writers of this compendium evidently do when it comes to oddball curios such as *Blacula*, *Roller Boogie* and *Belladonna Of Sadness*. Generally, though, it's as delightfully obscure as it is enjoyably random. **NEIL SMITH**

BFI FILM CLASSICS: Y TU MAMÁ TAMBIÉN

★★★★☆

PAUL JULIAN SMITH BFI BLOOMSBURY



Alfonso Cuarón's 21-years-young road movie drew mixed reviews from Mexican critics in 2001. Film prof Smith's brisk, sharp monograph reclaims its auteurist worth, showing how the movie's casual front masks a deep sophistication. Smith unpicks how Cuaron's "grown-up film about adolescents" carefully navigates stylistic symmetries and gender/class themes. Though Cuarón's *Roma* was more critically respected, its kid sibling laid down the route-map. **KEVIN HARLEY**

WARNER, HARPERCOLLINS, BFI/BLOOMSBURY, DEL REY, TITAN, WHITE LION, RUNNING PRESS ADULT

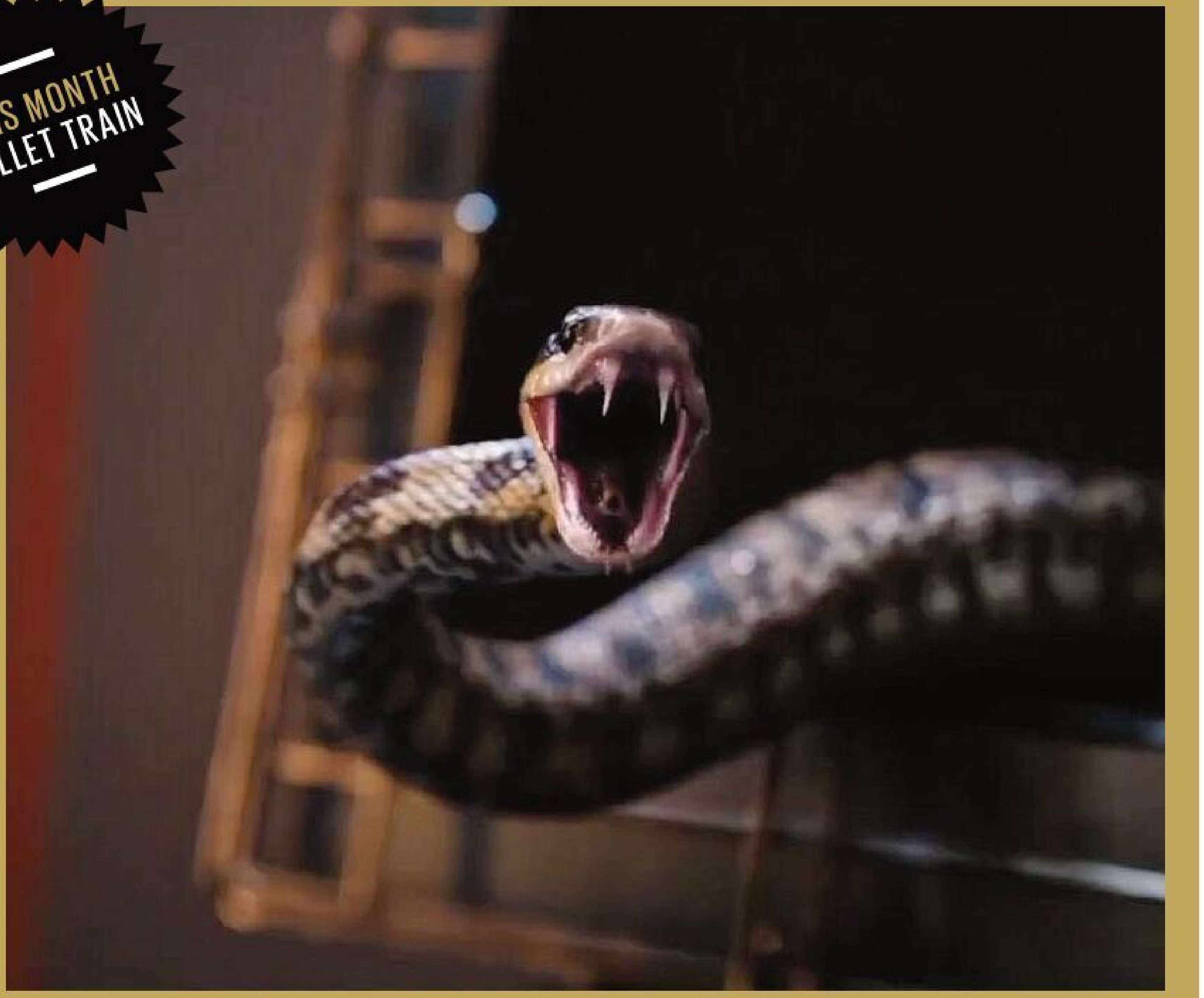
TOTAL FILM BUFF

CINEMA CELEBRATED AND DEBATED … ENIUS TO SUPERHERO LEVELS…

IS IT BOLLOCKS?

Film Buff investigates the facts behind outlandish movie plots.

THIS MONTH
BULLET TRAIN



Q In *Bullet Train*, a boomslang snake causes havoc. Are they really *that* deadly? Or has the truth derailed?

A Dan Kane, herpetologist, ZSL London Zoo

"Boomslangs have a powerful venom which is used to immobilise prey – ranging from chameleons to frogs to birds. This venom, being hemotoxic, causes blood-clotting abnormalities, resulting in anything from hypovolemic shock to a bleed on the brain or a stroke. As an extremely rough approximation of 'potency', the lethal dose required to kill an average mouse is 0.07 mg/kg. Scaling this up to assassinate a human, assuming they were made of mice, you'd need approximately 4.9 mg dry weight of venom. Boomslangs can provide up to 8 mg of venom in a single bite, so the potential for murder is clear.

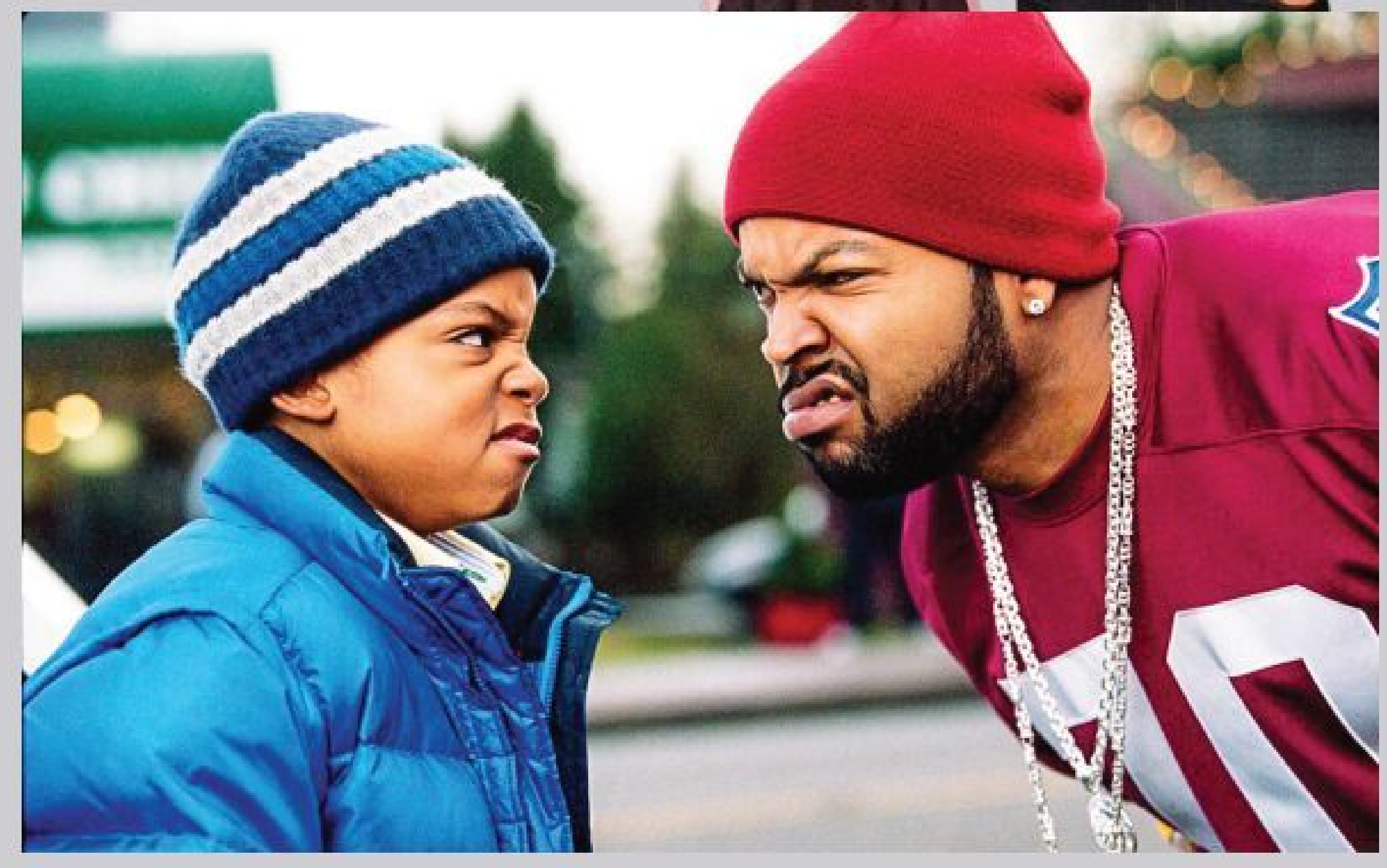
"In 1957, famous herpetologist Karl Patterson Schmidt died following a bite to the thumb from a juvenile boomslang, making notes on the effects almost until the end. We're talking 15 hours [*until he died*], so much longer than the 10 minutes quoted by the film. Another bite report from 2019 quotes a time of approximately seven hours between bite and death.

"A monovalent antivenom is available to treat the effects of a bite from a boomslang, though it certainly isn't a given that the patient will definitely make a recovery. Should they do that, many survivors of snake envenoming suffer long-lasting trauma, both physical and psychological. Post-bite physical effects could include anything from permanently damaged kidneys, requiring long-term dialysis, to a stroke leading to any number of pathologies."

VERDICT SEMI-BOLLOCKS

ALTERNATIVE BOX OFFICE

The biggest movies...
THAT ASK QUESTIONS



01	**ARE WE THERE YET?** 2005	$97.9M
02	**DID YOU HEAR ABOUT THE MORGANS?** 2009	$85.3M
03	**DUDE, WHERE'S MY CAR?** 2000	$73.2M
04	**O BROTHER, WHERE ART THOU?** 2000	$71.9M
05	**WHAT'S UP, DOC?** 1972	$66M
06	**WHAT ABOUT BOB?** 1991	$63.7M
07	**ARE WE DONE YET?** 2007	$58.4M
08	**WHO'S AFRAID OF VIRGINIA WOOLF?** 1966	$33.7M
09	**THEY CALL ME BRUCE?** 1982	$16.9M
10	**CASUAL SEX?** 1988	$12.2M

ON LOCATION

REEL SPOTS BEHIND THE CAMERA

WHAT? In *Monty Python And The Holy Grail*, King Arthur arrives at a suitably imposing castle where the monarch has a frustrating argument with its soldiers.

WHERE? **Doune Castle**, near Stirling, a 14th-century pile which also doubled up as Guy de Lombard's gaff as well as Castle Anthrax and Swamp Castle.

GO? The castle is open to visitors and boasts a woodland walk that's perfect for clip-clopping through with coconut shells.

SONY

Want us to investigate if a movie scenario is bollocks or snapped yourself at a film location? Contact us at totalfilm@futurenet.com

10 OF THE BEST

COCKTAILS IN MOVIES

Bottoms up!

1

OLD FASHIONED

When Emma Stone's nervy date ends up at the home of Ryan Gosling's ladies' man in *Crazy, Stupid, Love* he carefully crafts this bourbon-based sip. Necking it, she declares, "That's *not* my drink," before downing his. Dutch courage for the *Dirty Dancing* lift…

3

WHITE RUSSIAN

The Big Lebowski's super slacker The Dude likes his drink like he likes his clothes: simple to throw together and comforting. A mix of vodka, creamer and coffee liquor, this easy-drinking cocktail is swigged at any time of day – the coffee element makes it OK for breakfast, right?

5

GIMLET

The schlubby title character of *About Schmidt* (Jack Nicholson) is a sad sack at his own retirement party but a renegade at the bar. He orders up this peppy retro vodka, lime and syrup concoction when he slips away from the speeches in his honour. One for the road…

7

RED EYE

Cocktail by name, cocktail by nature – but this morning-after stinger is the crown jewel of Brian Flanagan's (Tom Cruise) mixology in the 1988 smash hit. Vodka, beer, tomato juice and a raw egg – whether mixed while juggling or not – will get you ready to dance on the bar again.

9

ORANGE WHIP

When John Candy's parole officer follows the Blues Brothers to a bar he's keen for everyone to try an Orange Whip – whether they're on-duty cops or not. Why have one when you can have three? Rum, vodka, triple sec, OJ and cream, if you're asking.

2

MAI TAI

Elvis' on-screen ma (Angela Lansbury, actually only 10 years older than him) in *Blue Hawaii* won't let him booze but is never without a tropical tipple. "Think I'll stick to the straight pineapple juice," the King concludes after a whiff of Momma's stiff drink.

4

GIBSON

Sandra Bullock's systems analyst unwittingly meets cute with her assassin on a Mexican beach when they both order the same sundowner in *The Net*. Not for them a regular martini – nope, add a pickled onion and it's a different drink and a conversation starter.

6

VESPER LYND

Bond invents a new bevvy at the poker table in *Casino Royale* in tribute to the Treasury's finest. Three measures of Gordon's, one of vodka, half a measure of Lillet and a lemon twist. So good everyone wants one, much to the exasperation of Big Bad Le Chiffre.

8

MANHATTAN

Marilyn Monroe's ukulele player, Sugar Kane Kowalczyk, won't let Prohibition get in the way of a train knees-up in *Some Like It Hot*. Using a hot-water bottle as a shaker, she's soon got a 12-girl party going on a bunkbed. Anyone got some maraschino cherries?

10

FRENCH 75

Rick (Humphrey Bogart) owns a 'gin joint' in *Casablanca* so it's only fitting he orders a drink with a gin component when his ex shows up with a new squeeze. Gin, champers, lemon juice and syrup fail to drown his sorrows, mind. Here's looking at you, kid. **JANE CROWTHER**

Did we miss something? Let us know on @totalfilm

HINDSIGHT CORNER

WILL SMITH

'THE SLAP'

28 March 2022

"You can't invite people from Philly or Baltimore nowhere!!"

29 July 2022

"Chris, I apologise to you. My behaviour was unacceptable… There's no part of me that thinks that that's the optimal way to handle a feeling of disrespect or insults."

PLAIN TALKING

THIS MONTH ONE AND DONE

A cautionary phrase in costuming to denote that multiple versions of a principle cast costume must be made to accommodate different requirements and any accidents. If the department only has one of any outfit, they are done.

FLOP CULTURE

THE WOLFMAN

In 2010, Benicio Del Toro's passion project met a silver bullet at the box office. Did studio dithering leave the horror too shredded to stand on its hind legs?

Why it was a good idea (on paper)

A lead with a lifelong love of the Wolfman suggested this project might have teeth. Nurturing the project, Del Toro banked a director with soul and style in music-video/*One Hour Photo* helmer Mark Romanek. A script by Andrew Kevin Walker (*Se7en*, *Sleepy Hollow*) added claws for optimism.

What went wrong?

If the Wolfman is half-man, half-beast, the film suffered from deeper identity issues. Romanek wanted to "infuse a balance of cinema in a popcorn-movie scenario", mixing psychological murk and mystery with roaring entertainment. When it became clear Universal wanted something else, Romanek couldn't rework the script even if he wanted to, due to a writers' strike. With a too-tight 80-day shooting schedule looming like a full moon, Romanek left the film. Enter director Joe Johnston (*The Rocketeer*, *Jumanji*) and writer David Self (1999's *The Haunting*), who tweaked the action on short notice. Still unhappy, Universal delayed *The Wolfman* by three months, then a year. Reshoots sullied the film's rep, while the studio vacillated over vital decisions involving the climax and score. Danny Elfman's symphonic version? Paul Haslinger's electronic attempt? Either way, this wolf was up the creek.

Redeeming feature

Oscar-worthy care went into the make-up, atmosphere and details. For the howl alone, the voices of opera singers, babies, Van Halen's David Lee Roth and Kiss' Gene Simmons were sampled. Del Toro's fire-licked final fight with a deliciously hammy Anthony Hopkins is pleasingly off-the-leash, too.

What happened next?

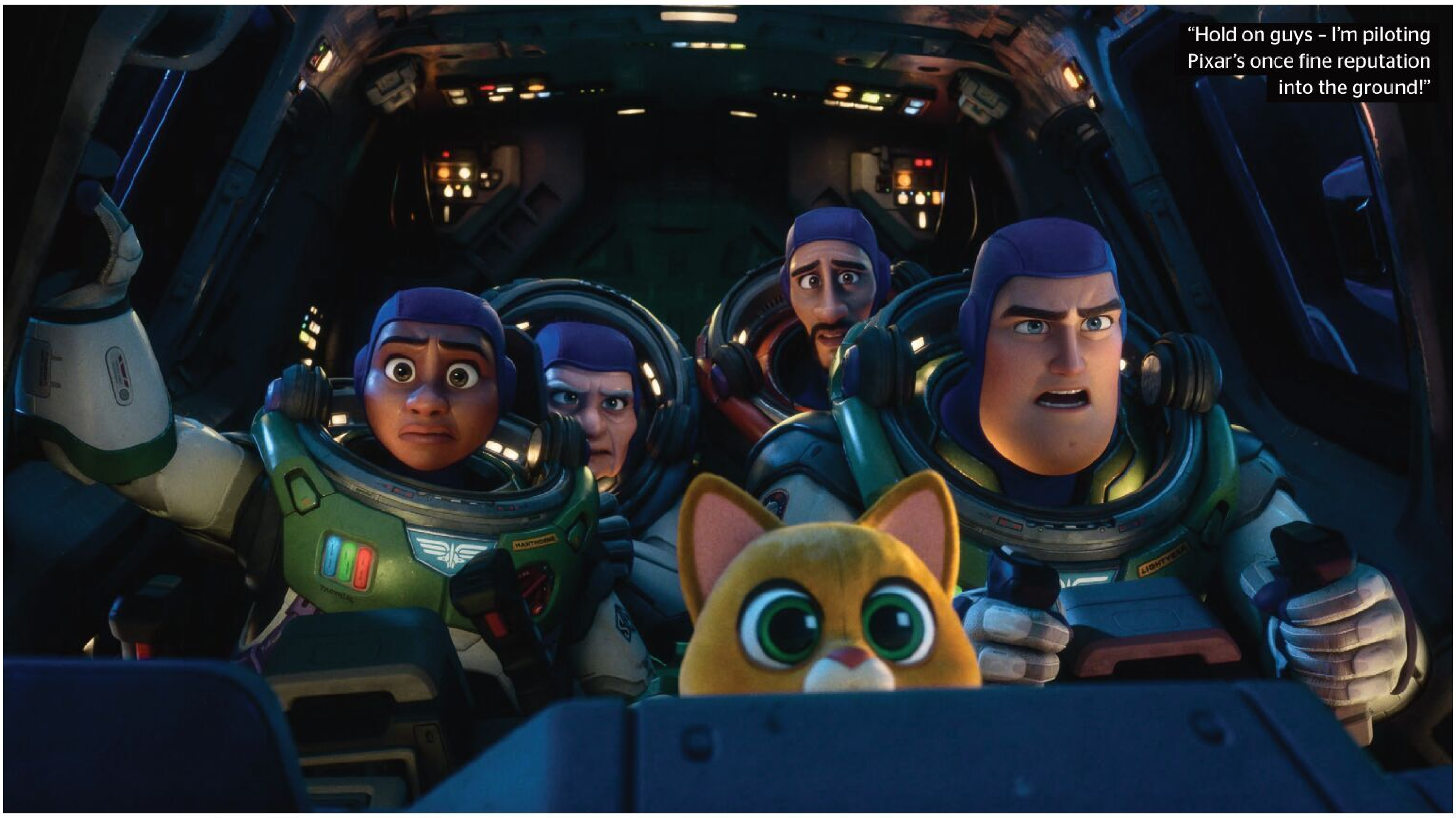
Howling reviews and rotten word of mouth produced a lupine loss-maker for Universal, who suffered the monsters' curse again with the Dark Universe series. Johnston's director's cut was superior but still sleepy: *Captain America* served him better.

Should it be remade?

Leigh Whannell's *The Invisible Man* proved you can respect and refresh a revered original. With Ryan Gosling and director Derek Cianfrance's Blumhouse Wolfman in pre-production, might now be the time of the wolf? **KEVIN HARLEY**

BUDGET	BOX OFFICE	AWARDS	TF STAR RATING	ROTTEN TOMATOES
$150m	$139.7m	4	★★★☆☆	33%

UNIVERSAL STUDIOS, GETTY



"Hold on guys – I'm piloting Pixar's once fine reputation into the ground!"

IS IT JUST ME OR IS LIGHTYEAR PIXAR'S WORST FILM?

NEIL SMITH

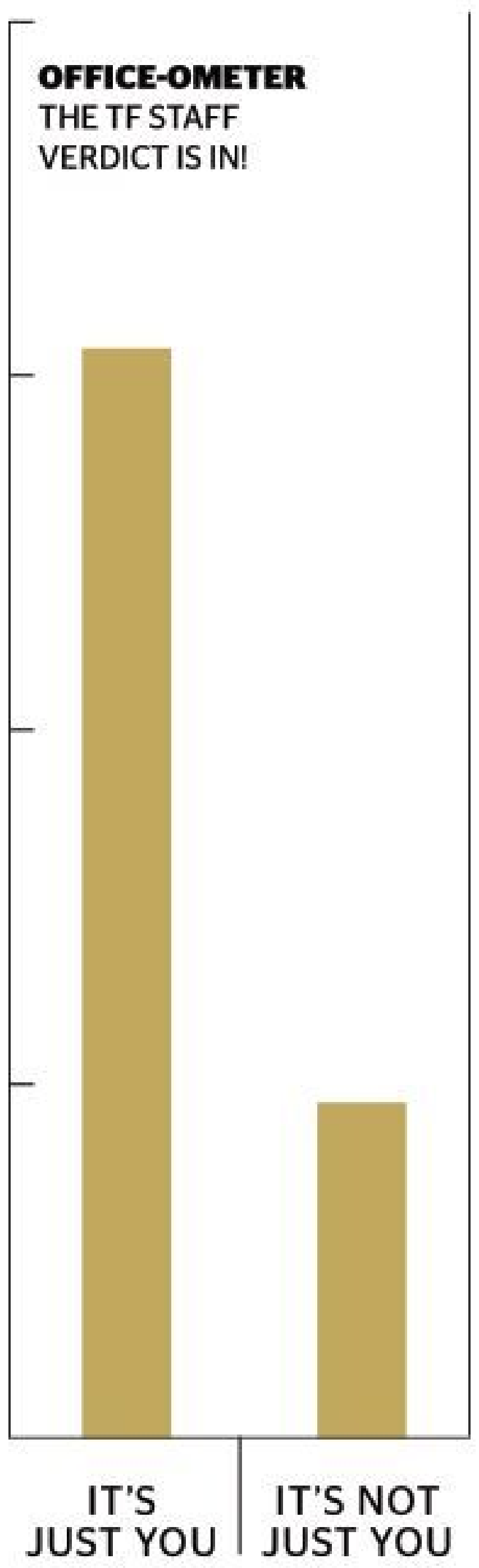
The plot of *Lightyear* hangs on a giant spacecraft crashing to the ground, an abortive take-off attempt stranding it on the surface of a remote and hostile planet. I'm sure it wasn't director Angus MacLane's intention to house within his film a metaphor so appropriate for its box-office performance. The sad fact, alas, is that Pixar's latest was just as much a misfire, taking barely enough from its cinema run to cover its estimated $200m budget.

Factor in distribution, marketing and other expenditures and we're looking at a hole in Disney's balance sheet of craterous proportions. Yet it is not what *Lightyear* lost that matters, but what it has cost its makers in reputation and prestige. Since 1995 the emirs of Emeryville have shown a rare and uncanny ability to entertain, amuse and satisfy their audience with superior, intelligent and form-advancing product. How did they manage to get it so catastrophically wrong?

The ruling mantra at Pixar used to be that story is king. *Lightyear*, though, is wholly beholden to its concept: the bemusing notion that it was *this* film that made Andy want to own a Buzz Lightyear toy. That's a weird abstraction to get your brain around, and even more so after it is revealed (spoiler alert!) that Buzz is also the movie's villain. Is this an origin story, or a wholesale character assassination? You have to wonder given how bull-headed Buzz behaves, qualities that linger even after he has found new buds who'll tolerate his egotism.

The bigger problem with *Lightyear*, however, is that it trades on our affection for the *Toy Story* franchise while giving us precious little in return. Chris Evans' Buzz isn't Tim Allen's, yet he – and we – are only here thanks to what Allen brought to the character. Take the original Buzz out of the equation, and you have an empty spacesuit engaged in meaningless heroics on a world we all can't wait to leave. *Lightyear* is like being taken on a journey we didn't want to go on by people who don't know where they're going. Or is it just me?

Share your reaction at www.gamesradar.com/totalfilm or on Facebook and Twitter.



LAST TIME SHOULD HOLLYWOOD UP ITS NAME GAME?

Keith P
[*Having the same name as earlier films*] is confusing and needs to stop!!

Jen Smith
I thought this year's *Scream* got away with it - just - because of the whole meta commentary.

Sammy
Scream totally didn't justify having the same title IMHO. Why be so ashamed of calling it *Scream 5*?

The Mighty Dave
I don't mind it. Definitely preferable to chucking in a load of colons and meaningless phrases.

DISNEY, PARAMOUNT

INTERVIEW
DATE
1 OCTOBER
1982

Spielberg on E.T.

To celebrate the 40th anniversary of **E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial**, we raid our Hollywood archives for this candid and personal interview with Steven Spielberg from the '80s.

WORDS ADAM TANSWELL

Back in October 1982, Steven Spielberg sat down in Beverly Hills to discuss his latest blockbuster, *E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial*. The heartwarming story of a suburban kid (played by Henry Thomas) and his homesick alien buddy had already won over American audiences, following an early summer release, but Universal Pictures had yet to launch the project overseas. In the States, *E.T.* was well on its way to becoming the highest-grossing movie of 1982, but British film fans had to wait until December to discover the delights of a young Drew Barrymore, an intoxicated extra-terrestrial and the iconic line "Phone home."

The quintessential '80s classic went on to win four Academy Awards, two Golden Globes and a BAFTA (for John Williams' emotional score), but there were only whispers of awards chatter when the 37-year-old director met ➳

➳ with the press for this interview. A bearded and bespectacled Spielberg looked casual and relaxed in his (Indiana Jones-esque) leather jacket as he prepared to discuss the personal origins of the movie's story, his first-day jitters, and the baking-based casting process he'd cooked up. There was even time to compare E.T. with Errol Flynn. So to celebrate the 40th anniversary of *E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial*, *Total Film* takes you back to 1982…

How did you come up with the initial idea for *E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial*?

I've always wanted to make an E.T. movie. Ever since I was a kid, I wanted to make a movie about an extra-terrestrial and their relationship with a family or a young child, but it's something I never got around to making. E.T. was my fantasy companion when I was a young kid growing up in Phoenix, Arizona. I was not a very popular kid in school. I was on the outside. I was lonely. I lived in Arizona, where nothing ever happened – but we had a lot of stars in the sky at night. It was very clear because there were not a lot of street lights to erase the stars.

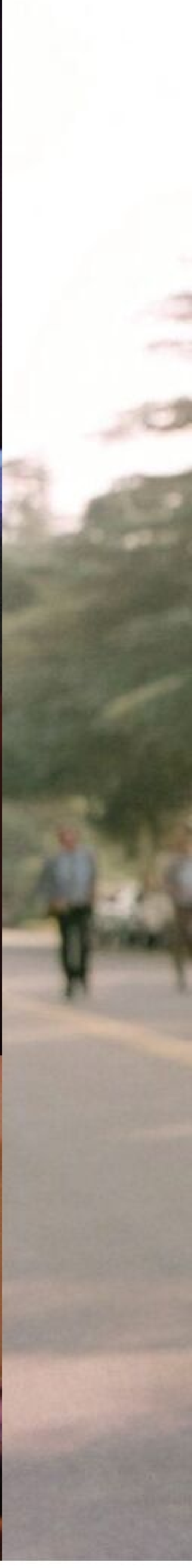
What would you think about as you gazed up to the stars?

I always remember thinking about how I was very lonely. I remember thinking about how much I'd love an imaginary friend from space who could show me how to do magic and how to live his life. I would show him my toys and he would show me his toys. This is a thought I've had since I was nine or 10 years old, but it's a thought that evolved and evolved and evolved and it eventually became *Close Encounters Of The Third Kind*. It evolved into a man-child relationship with a cosmic experience. After *Close Encounters* was over, I thought, "That's the grandiose vision I had when I was 10 years old. Now I want to make the purest idea that I had when I was 10 years old." That's why I made *E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial*.

How do the aliens in the two movies compare?

The creature in *Close Encounters* is quite different because it's almost like a star-child. It's a beautiful, embryonic, smooth creature that's almost like the perfection of the universe. That was lovely for the mood and feeling of the operatic ending of *Close Encounters*. That was appropriate. In this film, E.T. has to carry the entire movie in the same way you expect actors like Jack Nicholson and Barbra Streisand to carry a movie. The whole movie rests on E.T.'s little squashy shoulders.

Henry Thomas, Drew Barrymore and Robert MacNaughton as E.T.'s terrestrial friends.



Spielberg passing the time with Henry Thomas.

What was the thought process behind E.T.'s design?

I wanted a radical departure. In the universe, I truly believe there is life elsewhere. I believe there is life teeming out there and there are different species of creature depending on their environment and where they're from. The extra-terrestrial in *Close Encounters* is from a different star system. Perhaps it's even from a different galaxy than the extra-terrestrial from the film *E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial*. They are from two different worlds.

How did you come up with the initial look of the character?

The concept of E.T. was my concept. I wanted E.T. to be fat and short. I wanted him to be unattractive with a head that would come up on a nine-inch neck when he was curious, but then go back down again. The actual physical look of E.T. and how E.T. appears on film was a marriage between a few ideas I had, but mainly through the artistry and sensitivity of [*Italian special effects artist*] Carlo Rambaldi. Rambaldi is a brilliant artist and a brilliant father of space creatures

Spielberg described working with Drew Barrymore as a "wonderful" experience.

The run in to one of *E.T.*'s most iconic scenes. Bike rides would never be the same again.

> 'If Walt Disney was alive today and making movies, I think he would be my friendliest competitor'
>
> **STEVEN SPIELBERG**

everywhere, but it was a slow evolution. It took several months.

What goes through your mind when audiences call E.T. ugly?
Maybe to us and from an Earth point of view E.T. is ugly and ungainly. But perhaps where he comes from, he's a cross between Errol Flynn and Ava Gardner. You just don't know. He might be one of the most beautiful things on the surface of his planet. I wanted to show that beauty and surface quality isn't essential for a deep, meaningful cosmic relationship. It's really E.T.'s glowing red heart that reaches out to you, not his little shrivelled frog-like face. It would have been far too easy to have a beautiful-looking alien come to Earth and preach.

What was it like to direct Drew Barrymore?
It was like being her first, second and third grade teacher, her father and her mother, as well as her psychiatric counsellor all rolled into one. It was great. She was wonderful to work with. She was one of the pleasures that makes *E.T.* the movie one of the happiest experiences I've had making a film. She was just great.

Is it true that you will pull *E.T.* from any country that doesn't allow children to watch it? In Sweden, nobody under 11 is permitted to see the film…
No, I never said that. I think that the people who make those laws in Sweden are right to have those laws where violence is concerned. But if those people think the first 10 minutes of *E.T.* is too violent for kids under 11, then I think they should all go to Rotterdam and have their heads examined.

E.T. gets drunk in the movie, but there's no sex. He's too young for that, right?
Well, yes. He is a baby. E.T. is 800 Earth years old, but where he comes from, they live to 10,000 years, so he's just an infant. He hasn't reached cosmic puberty yet.

The scene where the bikes take flight is reminiscent of a Disney movie. What do you think Walt Disney would make of your films?
If Walt Disney were alive today and making movies, I think he would be my friendliest competitor. I think Walt Disney has influenced my generation more than any single individual in film. I'm talking everyone from Hitchcock to Fellini to Kubrick. I think Disney has been the inspiration of my current generation of filmmaking peers.

Many tears have been shed watching the movie. Do you cry when you watch it?
Not anymore. But I cry when I see people crying. They make me cry, not the movie.

Do you worry about how you're going to top *E.T.*?
Not really. After I made *Jaws*, I went to Europe and journalists kept saying to me, "Your life is over. Your career is over. You'll never top *Jaws*. Are you going to quit now? Are you going into another line of work?" To me, it doesn't necessarily mean that a movie has to make more money to top another movie. I think *Close Encounters* aesthetically tops *Jaws*, but it didn't make the same kind of money that *Jaws* made. When I think about how I'm going to top a picture, I don't think of it in terms of

FROM THE ARCHIVE

dollars and cents. I think of it in terms of whether or not I'm going to be satisfied as an artist and as a person.

What's the secret to your success?
I sleep late. I stay up late. I eat junk food. I still listen to my mother and I make the kind of movies that I would like to see as an audience member with $5 in his pocket who wants an evening out. I'm always around a lot of people who aren't part of the movie business. They often say to me, "Gee, I haven't been to a movie in six months." When I ask them why, they tell me the movies they would like to see are the kind of pictures that Hollywood isn't making anymore. They tell me they much prefer to watch Humphrey Bogart movies on television. When I decide to make a certain kind of movie, I'm very careful to say, "This is something I would like to see if George Lucas or Francis Coppola was making it." It's an idea or a concept that I would like to pay my $5 and sit in the theatre for a few hours to watch.

What goes through your mind on the opening day of a new movie?
I'm squeamish and neurotic before a movie opens in theatres. I'm sick in my stomach. I get dizzy. I can't believe I'm there. I wish I weren't. I mean, I go through the same neurosis that somebody goes through with their first play or their first feature or their first television show or their first job. No matter how many successes I have, I still get that same empty sick weak feeling the minute I have to show my movie to somebody for the first time. I'm a basket case. I'm neurotic. I go to Hawaii and I take the phone off the hook. I don't want to know about it.

What can you reveal about the rumoured sequel to *E.T.*?
I'm going to be as quiet about *E.T. 2* as I was last year about *E.T.* before the movie was released. I'm not going to say too much about the story.

What are your thoughts on movie sequels?
I don't really believe in sequels, but I do believe in further adventures. I think that the next *Raiders* is not a sequel. It's a completely different kind of a movie and it's a previous adventure of Indiana Jones, so I was able to justify it and say, "Gee, the idea is great and the script is wonderful. It has no relationship to the first movie. The only character that continues through is Harrison Ford." It's a very original film that I'd like to make.

You haven't always signed up to direct the sequels to your movies. Why?
I did not want to do *Jaws 2* because I purposely blew the shark up at the end of *Jaws*. It was my idea to blow him up with an air bottle because I didn't want to see sequels coming out of *Jaws*. I wouldn't wish that on anybody. Going out to the ocean and making a movie for six months is a terrible experience. I wouldn't wish that on my worst enemy. However, money speaks louder than logic, so Universal went out and made *Jaws 2* and they electrocuted the shark. In *Jaws 3*, they have another shark and I don't know how they're going to dispose of it – but until audiences stop going to the movies there will be as many *Jaws* as there are sharks in the sea.

The director talks through a key scene with Henry Thomas.

Just a normal day's work, testing out the spaceship for ease of access.

ALAMY

Spielberg considers *E.T.* to be a more intimate movie than his other blockbusters.

"Over there, Henry. Look at the funny little space frog."

> 'I make the kind of movies that I would like to see as an audience member with $5 in his pocket'
>
> **STEVEN SPIELBERG**

Why would you be willing to do a sequel to *E.T.*?
Because I have a story that is a wonderful story that would be just as good if there was never an original *E.T.* It's a totally different story. It's very unusual and very nice and it doesn't need the first movie to give it legs.

You have loads of blockbuster movies under your belt. Are you ever tempted to direct smaller projects, like *On Golden Pond*?
E.T. is the smallest movie I will probably ever make. This is my version of a small, personal, sensitive movie that might fall into the same category as *On Golden Pond*. I've made one now. Now I go off and make *Raiders 2*, which is a larger movie.

Is it true that you started a new casting process during *Raiders* that involved baking cookies?
[*Laughs*] I've been casting movies since 1969 and I've had many interviews with many actors. I don't hire movie stars. I like hiring unknowns, but it's very hard to get to know somebody in 15 minutes. Especially if they come into an office and they're nervous and intimidated by meeting you. Depending on who they are, you're often intimidated by meeting them. I found that I was only getting to know people in the last two or three minutes, but then the time would be up and there would be a whole waiting room of other actors to come in. On *Raiders*, I thought I would try something new.

What did you do?
I had them come into a big kitchen and we would cook. We would bake bread. We'd make cakes and cookies. We'd cook lunch, but we would do everything from scratch. I got to know these actors a lot better in a kitchen setting than I did in a double suite at the Sheraton Arms Hotel in New York City. It was a much easier way for me to get to know who these people were and they let their guard drop. They weren't so defensive. They opened up quicker and I was able to see people faster that way. And we all ate and got fat.

***E.T.* has been a runaway success in the States. What's the merchandise like?**
With the merchandising, we have been very, very careful to limit the amount of licences to about 27 licences. That's about the same number of licences that *Star Wars* had. We didn't want to flood the market, but we have well over 120 lawsuits against individuals or companies around this country and in Europe who have been making illegal *E.T.* products.

How does the success of the movie change your perspective on the industry?
Well, it certainly continues to give me an ever-growing confidence that the public love to be entertained and transported by a movie experience. When people in such massive quantity go to see a movie like *E.T.*, it gives me hope that all the doomsayers are wrong when they say, "Gee, the movie industry is coming to an end and television is taking over." There's still hope that movies will go on forever, which is my hope for sure.

E.T. THE EXTRA-TERRESTRIAL IS AVAILABLE ON DVD, BLU-RAY AND DIGITAL DOWNLOAD.

THE BIG SHOT

JOKER'S STAIR DANCE

As Gary Glitter's deliberately provocative 'Rock And Roll Part 2' plays (Glitter is a convicted paedophile), put-upon Arthur Fleck (Joaquin Phoenix) finally transmutes from sad clown to Joker. Leaving his apartment wearing his true colours in every way, Fleck puffs on a cigarette while dancing to the beat of his own drum down the Gotham steps near his home – high-kicking, puddle-stomping and laughing his way into infamy. Producer Emma Tillinger Koskoff knew this moment was crucial to landing the emotional pay-off of Todd Phillips' film and admits to being stressed about it as filming drew closer – especially as the location for the scene, the municipal stairs between Shakespeare and Anderson at West 167th Street in the Bronx, was entirely public. "It's really the first time you're seeing the Joker, aside from the reveal in the room. This was an extremely important scene for [*Phoenix*]. His privacy while shooting the scene was of paramount importance to him. New York City has no paparazzi laws whatsoever. If you are in a public space, they can literally be at the camera. You can't tell them to get off the set. There was no way to shield him… but I'm pretty sure we got away with it somehow."

Though Phoenix was filmed by people in neighbouring apartments during his takes, the true intensity of his performance only became apparent when viewing the film – Arthur, now free of his burdens, hoofing it down the stairs he's slogged up numerous times earlier in the story, represents rebirth, rebellion and serious DGAF attitude. The controversial choice of Glitter's song was something that was in the script from the start. Though editor Jeff Groth toyed with other tracks in the edit, Glitter's song ultimately worked the best so was kept despite anticipation of controversy. And though Phillips originally imagined a terracotta suit for this big reveal, costume designer Mark Bridges thought the colour 'weak' so swapped for an ox-blood suit that Arthur would wear for his stand-up, combining with the waistcoat he wears as a clown and a teal shirt that "could have been in his wardrobe". The result is an outfit that comes from pieces of Arthur's past but, put together, creates a dynamic new look.

So instantly iconic is the scene that it prompts fan reenactments to such a degree that New York City congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez appealed to tourists to stay away due to overcrowding on the steps and disruption to the neighbourhood. Hard to believe, then, that the scene originally didn't involve dancing. But Phoenix realised the impact such an explosion of movement could have in conveying Joker's true metamorphosis. "Joaquin realised the dance could be cathartic: a moment that showcases Arthur's transition from shyness to life and direction," recalls location manager Sam Hutchins. "I've never seen an actor immerse themselves so deeply into a role."

Arthur dances before this moment in the movie, but this is one of pure chaos energy. "I think one of the earliest things we spoke about was that Arthur had music in him," says Phillips. "You know, like it just existed in him. I love the dancing in the movie. I think we should have more of it." Certainly more to come in the in-production sequel, then… **JANE CROWTHER**

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JAMES TRUSSON ADR MIXER

Trusson got his break working on commercials, TV shows and videogames.

BEHIND THE SCENES

James Trusson is an ADR mixer who works at SNK Studios in London. His TV work includes *Pennyworth*, *Bridgerton* and *The Crown*, and he's worked on such features as *Black Beauty*, *Memory* and the upcoming *Night At The Museum: Kahmunrah Rises Again*. He tells *Buff* about a profession by which "the quality of your work is determined by how unnoticeable it is…"

How would you describe your role in simple terms?
ADR is the process of rerecording lines of dialogue, in a controlled studio environment, that were recorded on set. There can be many reasons why ADR is needed, such as replacing noisy or unintelligible audio, improving performance, adding lines to aid the storyline or to fix continuity errors, addressing accent issues, or replacing profanity with TV-safe alternatives for TV/airline versions. When the actor comes into the studio, the role of an ADR mixer is to capture the desired performance with the correct tone, projection, pitch and sync.

How did you get into ADR?
I trained as a sound engineer at the University of Surrey through their Tonmeister degree course, and as part of this, I spent a placement year at Aquarium Studios in Soho. During this time, I was able to absorb a lot of knowledge about post-production workflows and how a studio operates. I returned there as a sound engineer when I graduated and spent a lot of time recording voiceovers for commercials, TV series and computer games, as well as editing sound effects and foley for feature films.

What do you think is the biggest misconception about your job?
I've worked on many films and TV shows as a foley artist, and my friends couldn't believe that I was spending weeks on end recording footsteps, props and clothes movements; they assumed all that sound was picked up by the on-set microphones. The same principle applies to ADR. People probably don't realise how much dialogue is rerecorded in post-production.

What's the best thing about your job?
The sound industry is packed full of really talented and passionate people. It's definitely a privilege to be able to work with some of the world's most successful actors – you can see from their performance in the studio why they have achieved so much. And getting to work on some of the biggest films and TV shows out there is really exciting.

What's the worst thing about your job?
For an ADR session to take place, a lot of busy people's schedules have to align. Then add in working with people over the internet in different time zones around the world; scheduling sessions becomes something that is really tricky. As an ADR mixer you have to learn to accept the long days, early starts and late evenings that come with the job.

What's the most memorable project you've worked on? And which was the most challenging?
A memorable one for me recently was working on Season 2 of *Bridgerton*. I was a big fan of the show before working on it, so meeting the cast and crew was a huge pleasure. Working with Kate Winslet on *Black Beauty*, Kenneth Branagh on *Fireheart* and Bill Nighy on *Dragonkeeper* were certainly moments where I felt very star-struck.

The most challenging jobs are usually when there is some sort of remote aspect involved. For animation projects, often actors have their own home setup and we'll record them over the internet using audio streaming software. In these cases, you're reliant on the internet connection being stable on both sides or the audio stream will glitch or drop out entirely.

> 'I was a big fan of Bridgerton before working on it, so meeting the cast and crew was a huge pleasure'

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Bridgerton's Kate and Anthony sound their best.

If someone wants to be an ADR engineer what should they do?
I came from a technical background – the Tonmeister course required maths, physics and music A levels and focused on a lot of scientific grounding before stepping foot in the studio. But lots of people have film or music qualifications and learn the technical stuff on the job.

Most people will start as a runner making tea. You'll absorb enough information to be able to get an assistant role either for a post-production house or a freelancer and they'll show you the ropes. From there you can get a sound-engineer role. The best way to learn the process is to shadow an ADR mixer and sit in on sessions. When you're ready, short films are a good place to start to grow in confidence. Once you've begun working on TV series and feature films, the ball will start rolling. **JANE CROWTHER**

SNKSTUDIOS, NETFLIX

GETTY

1948-2022

OLIVIA NEWTON-JOHN

To movie lovers, Olivia Newton-John will forever be *Grease*'s Sandy, the squeaky-clean new girl at Rydell High who affects a finger-in-socket perm and spray-on black spandex to find a love to sing and dance about with John Travolta's 'bad boy', Danny Zuko. The makeover mirrored that of the singer-actor's career. Born in Cambridge and moving to Melbourne, Australia, at the age of five when her father, a former MI5 officer in WW2, took up a post as a college professor, Newton-John won a talent show at 16.

From there she released some unsuccessful singles before scoring a hit with a cover of Bob Dylan's 'If Not For You' in 1971, and then making a name for herself in soft pop and country – 'I Honestly Love You' won her the first of four Grammys, and 'If You Love Me (Let Me Know)' made the US Top 10. It mattered not to rock journalists, who dismissed her as inauthentic. Newton-John herself conceded she was "nice" and "pretty boring".

Then (greased) lightning struck. The 1978 musical was a huge hit, and the soundtrack became the second-biggest selling album of the year in the US. Singles 'Summer Nights' and 'You're The One That I Want' were huge, while Newton-John's ballad 'Hopelessly Devoted To You' was nominated for Best Song at the Oscars. An OBE followed in 1979, by which time Newton-John, like Sandy, had discovered a penchant for leather. Her next album after *Grease* was called *Totally Hot*, and single 'Physical' topped the US charts for 10 weeks, panting out the lyrics, "Let me hear your body talk." Newton-John decided she was not so "nice" and "boring" after all, telling *Rolling Stone*, "Innocent, I'm not," and pointing out that paragon-of-virtue Doris Day was married four times.

Newton-John's next movie, the roller-skating musical *Xanadu*, co-starring Gene Kelly, was lambasted, but the album went double platinum and the singles 'Xanadu' and 'Magic' soared. Likewise, 1983 romantic comedy *Two Of A Kind*, reuniting Newton-John and Travolta, was a dud, but the soundtrack album went platinum.

Newton-John's career quietened in the 1980s as she concentrated on raising her daughter, Chloe Lattanzi, and in 1992 she was diagnosed with breast cancer. She recovered and continued to make albums and the odd forgettable movie (*Score: A Hockey Musical*, anyone?), while also becoming an ardent advocate for animal rights and plant-based treatments for cancer. When her cancer returned in 2017, she received some of her treatment at the Melbourne cancer research centre that she had helped to fund.

In 2018, Newton-John released an autobiography, *Don't Stop Believin'*, and in 2020 she was appointed a Dame. She died on 8 August at her ranch in Southern California, and is survived by her second husband, John Easterling, and her daughter Chloe from her first marriage to actor Matt Lattanzi.

JAMIE GRAHAM

1969-2022

ANNE HECHE

GETTY

Taken off life support nine days after a devastating car accident, Anne Heche will be remembered for her work across television, theatre and film, and for a troubled personal life that she never sought to hide. "I put a very high premium on honesty," she said.

Born in Aurora, Ohio, the youngest of five children to Donald Heche, a choir director, and Nancy (née Prickett), Heche later wrote that her father - an evangelical Christian and a closeted gay man who died of Aids in 1983 – had abused her throughout her childhood.

Aged 18, Heche landed the dual role of good and evil twins in soap opera *Another World*, for which she won a Daytime Emmy in 1991. She made her feature debut in *The Adventures Of Huck Finn* (1993) and co-starred with Catherine Keener in indie comedy drama *Walking And Talking* (1996). Supporting roles in *Donnie Brasco*, *Volcano*, *I Know What You Did Last Summer* and *Wag The Dog* (all 1997) followed, and she starred with Harrison Ford in action adventure *Six Days, Seven Nights*, and as Marion Crane in Gus Van Sant's remake of *Psycho* (both 1998).

What looked set to be a stellar film career was curtailed when Heche and Ellen DeGeneres, star of sitcom *Ellen*, went public with their relationship. "I was fired from a $10m picture deal and did not see the light of day in a studio picture," said Heche. Hollywood, sadly, could not countenance her playing straight romantic leads. Heche guest-starred on TV show *Ally McBeal* in 2001 before migrating to Broadway. In 2004, she received a Tony Award nomination for the revival of *Twentieth Century*.

Heche continued to work in film (*Rampart*, *Girl Fight* and *My Friend Dahmer* are standouts) and TV (*Everwood*, *Nip/Tuck*, *Men In Trees*, *Hung*, *Chicago P.D.*), and has feature films *Wildfire* and *Full Ride*, and TV movie *Girl In Room 13*, still to release. She is survived by her two sons, Homer, from her marriage to cameraman Coleman Laffoon, and Atlas, with actor James Tupper. She is also survived by her estranged mother, Nancy, and her sister Abigail. Siblings Susan, Cynthia and Nathan have all passed. **JAMIE GRAHAM**

1941-2022

WOLFGANG PETERSEN

GETTY

The German filmmaker Wolfgang Petersen has died of pancreatic cancer at the age of 81. He leaves behind 29 films that include such much-loved titles as *Das Boot*, *The NeverEnding Story*, *In The Line Of Fire* and *Air Force One*.

The son of a naval officer, Petersen was raised in West Germany. He made 8mm movies at school and belonged to the generation of filmmakers that boasted the likes of Wim Wenders, Rainer Werner Fassbinder and Werner Herzog.

Cutting his professional teeth on TV movies, Petersen's first theatrical release was *One Or The Other Of Us* (1974), a thriller starring Jürgen Prochnow. It became a hit. But it was epic U-boat drama *Das Boot* (1981) that turned Hollywood heads. Set deep within the Battle of the Atlantic during World War 2, its raw realism and suffocating tension saw Petersen and his crew surface to six Oscar nominations, including Best Director.

Petersen next made fantasy classic *The NeverEnding Story* (1984) and cult science-fiction adventure *Enemy Mine* (1985), then moved to Santa Monica in 1987. In the 1990s he would become synonymous with starry, big-budget action thrillers: *In The Line Of Fire* (1993) with Clint Eastwood and John Malkovich, *Outbreak* (1995) with Dustin Hoffman and Rene Russo, and *Air Force One* (1997) with Harrison Ford and Gary Oldman. Made with craft and professionalism, these movies mark the high point of his Hollywood career. Later blockbusters such as *The Perfect Storm* (2000), *Troy* (2004) and disaster-movie remake *Poseidon* (2006) were not of the same standard, and Petersen took a 10-year hiatus after the last flopped both commercially and critically. He returned with German comedy *Vier Gegen Die Bank* (2016), his final film.

"Theatres are always going to be around," said Petersen as technological advancements led many to fear that the huge screens his movies lend themselves to would disappear before too long. "I don't think the desire for that magic will ever go away."

Petersen is survived by his wife of four decades, Maria Borgel-Petersen, and his son, Daniel, from the first of his two marriages. **JAMIE GRAHAM**

INTERMISSION

A WRITER TAKES PAUSE TO CONSIDER...

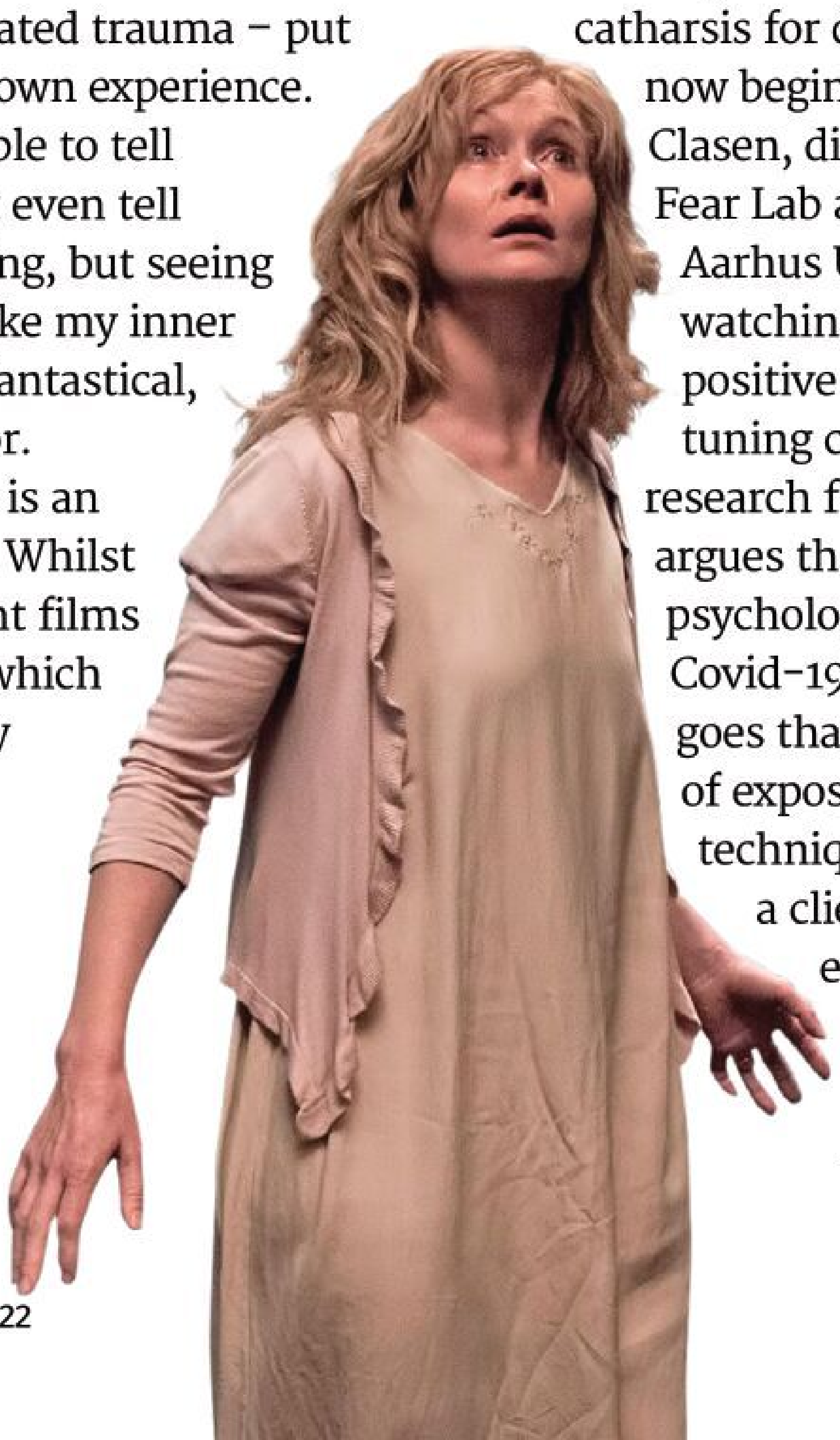
Horror as therapy.

TIM COLEMAN
@FATSCOLEMAN

Shortly after my father passed away in 2015 I watched *The Babadook.* I'd been aware of this critically acclaimed supernatural chiller for a while, but when a good friend – who had lost both his parents – told me it had spoken to his own grief I decided to give it a go. And so, like the haunted family in Jennifer Kent's masterpiece, I let it in.

The experience was epiphanic. I'm something of a cliché – a man bad at articulating his feelings – so I'd had difficulty putting words to the maelstrom of emotion that was swirling inside me following Dad's death (some months later I would go to therapy when my wife suggested my debilitating migraines might be linked to repressed stress). However, watching Amelia (Essie Davis) battle the Babadook – itself a manifestation of sublimated trauma – put a visual language to my own experience. I might not have been able to tell anyone – hell, I couldn't even tell myself – how I was feeling, but seeing that story play out felt like my inner world was writ large in fantastical, expressionistic metaphor.

Saying the unsayable is an innate quality of horror. Whilst some might look at fright films as exploitative or base (which at times they undeniably are), I feel the genre's principal feature is honesty. There are things in this world that all of us wish didn't exist – loss, illness, pain – but which nevertheless plague everyone at various points of our lives. In this, horror does not flinch: people may have an instinctive desire to look away, hold our shit together, shut down or bottle up, but horror holds our hand and invites us to bravely look at what scares us most. There's a liberation in such confrontation, a freedom and a truthfulness.



> 'You might be watching a masked killer slice and dice, but we all know deep down that we are not in danger'

Genre geeks have experienced this catharsis for decades, but academics are now beginning to research it. Mathias Clasen, director of the Recreational Fear Lab and associate professor at Aarhus University, suggests that watching horror movies "may have positive effects in terms of fine-tuning coping strategies", whilst research from Scrivner et al (2021) argues that horror fans were more psychologically resilient during the Covid-19 pandemic. The argument goes that scary movies are a kind of exposure therapy – a genuine technique where therapists expose a client to their fears in a safe environment, and thus help them build resilience.

The key here is safety. As the last two years have shown us, the real world is at times resolutely unsafe, but in the controlled confines of a 90-minute horror film the rules are flipped. You might be watching a masked killer slice and dice, but we all know deep down that we ourselves are not in danger: instead we get to process our own real-world fears, and in doing so become stronger.

For me this was all brought home again a few years later when my mum was also diagnosed with terminal cancer. (I should say I'm not sharing this for sympathy: I can't stand pity parties, but like I said I'm trying to be more open, so here we are.)

Following what the doctors called a "catastrophic event", Mum was in a coma for a fortnight until she finally slipped away. During those weeks I was at hospital, holding her hand and – in-between telling her I loved her – I watched horror films with my headphones in. It was then that I saw Issa López's superlative *Tigers Are Not Afraid*, a del Toro-esque fairy tale about a girl whose mother dies and is then guided by her maternal spectre. It was the perfect film at that awful moment, and in that hospital ward I felt intensely, profoundly comforted. I got to tell López this sometime later, and she spoke about making *Tigers* – filmed after losing her own mother – as a way of saying goodbye.

At the end of the day we all need help sometimes, and I'm certainly not suggesting cinema replaces professional support (I've been through counselling twice and it's changed my life). But what horror can do – something I believe is good and right and true – is create a safe place for us to have those conversations, to face our fears and, in doing so, to overcome.

WINONA RYDER

The people's Joyce...

STRANGE AND UNUSUAL

Born to creatively minded parents in Winona, Minnesota in 1971, Winona Laura Horowitz grew up on a Northern California commune, where her mother screened movies on a sheet on a barn. After feature debut *Lucas* (1986), she brought goth style and joyously groovy moves to the deathless Lydia in Tim Burton's *Beetlejuice* (1988). As Veronica in *Heathers* (1988), she became the ingenuous face of Gen X high-school angst.

SNOW-BIZ SUPERSTAR

Between *Great Balls Of Fire!* (1989) and *Welcome Home, Roxy Carmichael* (1990), Ryder reasserted her talents and proto-grunge chic. But it was her guileless performance and snow dance in *Edward Scissorhands* (1990) that connected her to audiences and mega-stardom. While her relationship with Johnny Depp helped bank headlines, *Mermaids* (1990) reiterated her talent for expressing teenage insecurity and, in 'The Shoop Shoop Song (It's In His Kiss)' video, dancing her cares away.

AGE OF EXPERIENCE

If *Reality Bites* (1994) was peak '90s pop-culture Ryder, Jim Jarmusch's *Night On Earth* (1991) signalled a desire to stretch herself. Deserved Oscar noms for Gillian Armstrong's *Little Women* (1994) and Martin Scorsese's *The Age Of Innocence* (1993) followed. She struggled amid the sets and violence of *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (1992) and *Alien Resurrection* (1997), but brought heartfelt commitment to *The Crucible* and Al Pacino's documentary-drama hybrid *Looking For Richard* (both '96).

GROWING GAINS

After *Girl, Interrupted* (1999), Ryder's career also suffered interruptions: poor movie choices, tabloid talk. But she showed smarts in challenging comeback roles, re-establishing herself between Richard Linklater's innovative *A Scanner Darkly* (2006) and a recognise-me? mother cameo in *Star Trek* (2009). Best of all, she embraced acting her age with a subtextually loaded appearance in *Black Swan* (2010). "I sort of graduated," she says.

HELLO, STRANGER

A reunion with Burton (*Frankenweenie*, 2012) and a cameo in Michael Almereyda's *Experimenter* (2015) reiterated Ryder's talents. Audiences missed her and so did the Duffer brothers, who hit gold casting Ryder as the harrowed but heroic Joyce Byers in *Stranger Things* (2016-). A font of on-set period pop-culture wisdom, Ryder also dispenses advice to her young co-stars on handling fame. As *Scissorhands*' Kim says: "Because I was there." **KEVIN HARLEY**

KEY MOVIES

HEATHERS 1988

★★★★★

Ryder brings a conscience to "teen-angst bullshit" in Michael Lehmann's corrosive high-school satire: despite the title, it's Veronica's movie.

EDWARD SCISSORHANDS 1990

★★★★★

Counter-cast in a blonde wig, Ryder shows heart and empathy in Burton's friendly Frankenstein romance. And the snow dance? Still magic.

THE AGE OF INNOCENCE 1993

★★★★★

Golden Globe win, Oscar nomination. Ryder deserved all the plaudits for stealth schemer May in Scorsese's deceptively cruel costume piece.

BLACK SWAN 2010

★★★★☆

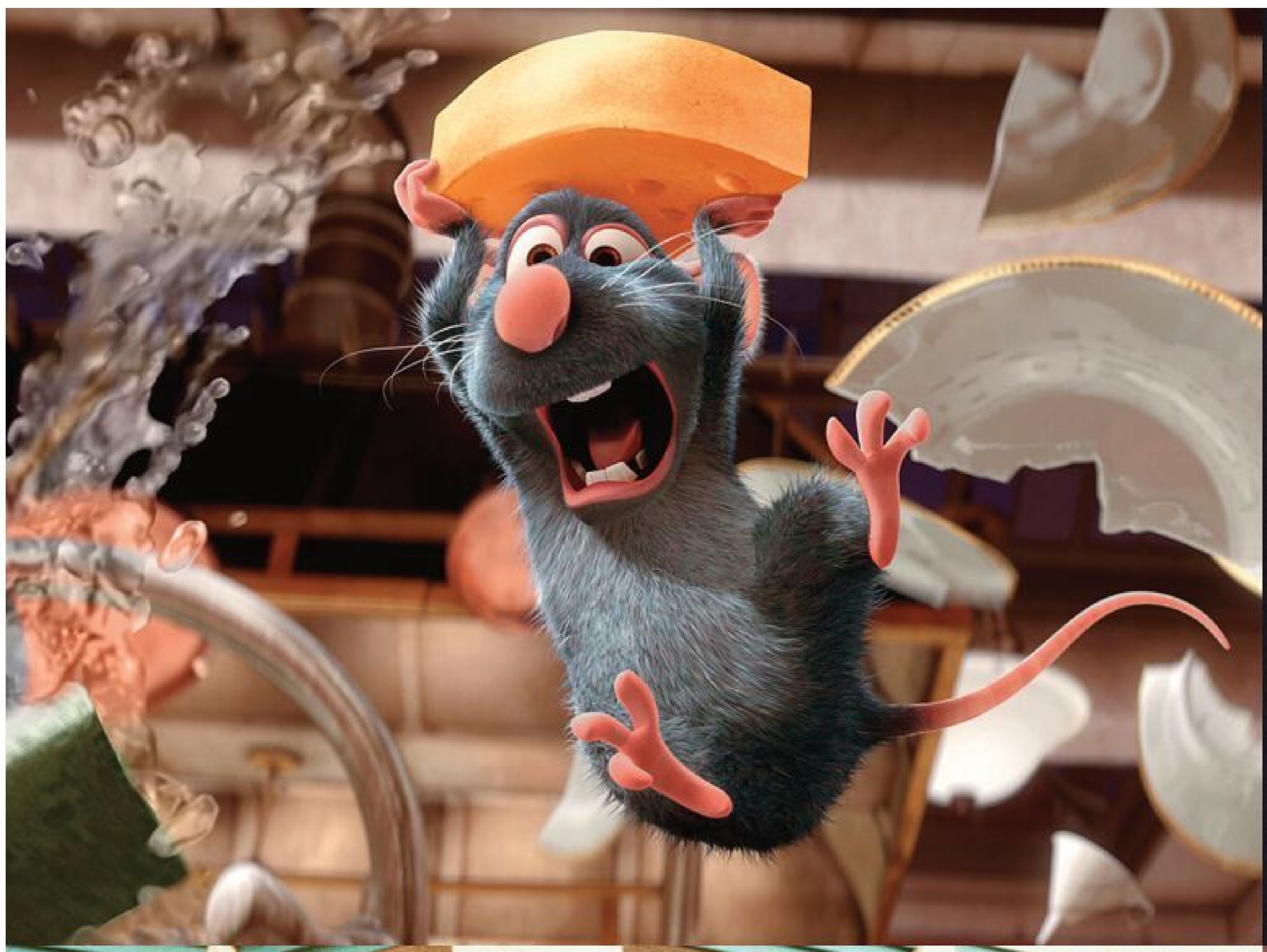
Calling bitter ex-ballerina Beth a "juicy hamburger of a role", Ryder attacks the cameo like meat she's been starved of.

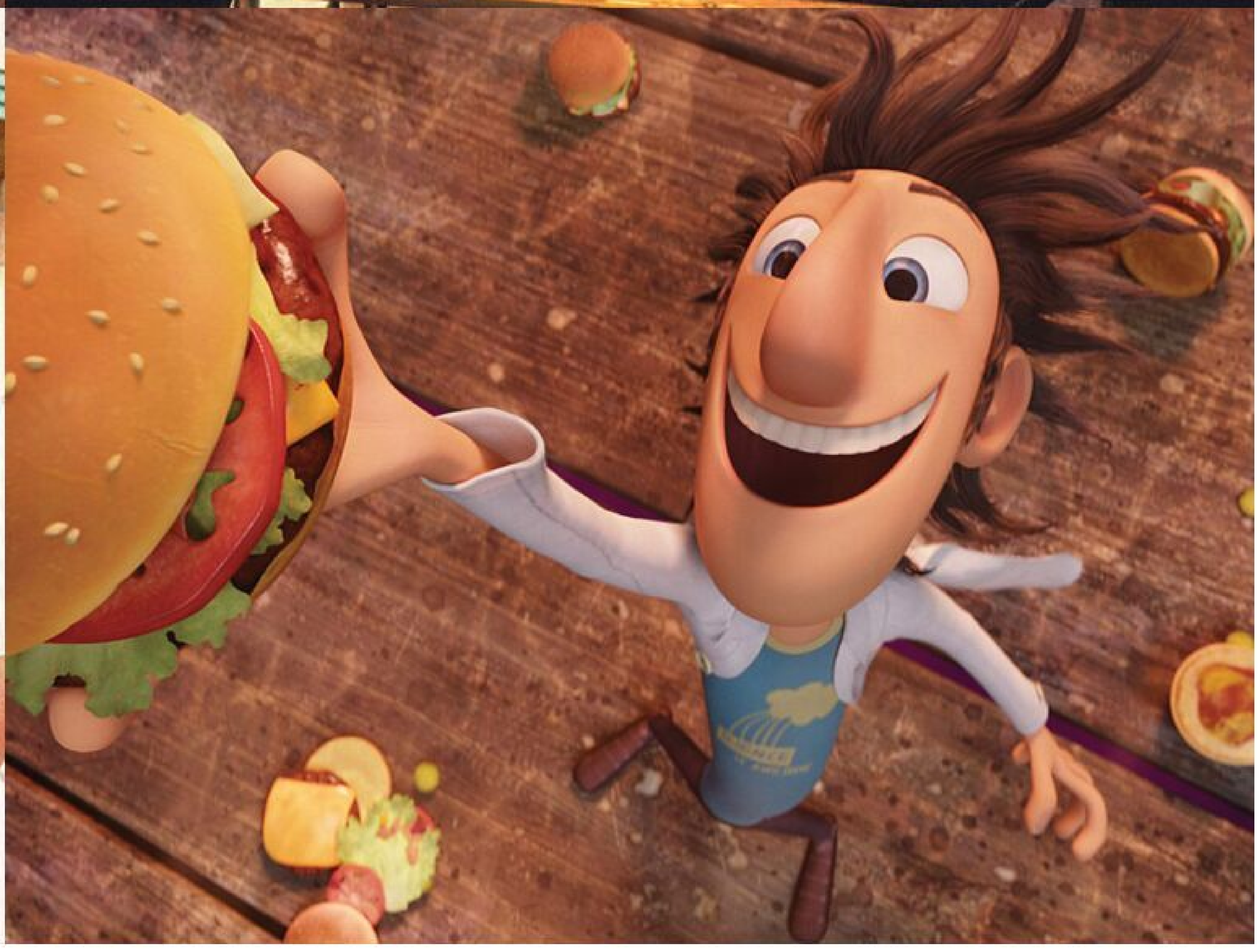
WARNER BROS, 20TH CENTURY STUDIOS, SONY, GLOBAL ENTERTAINMENT PRODUCTIONS, ARROW, NETFLIX

THE TF BRAIN

FOOD ON FILM

A 15-course feast of comestible questions...



GOOD BURGER


EASY

1 What's the name of the rat protagonist in *Ratatouille*?
2 Name the fictional fast-food restaurant central to *Coming To America*.
3 *Roadrunner* is a portrait of which chef who passed away in 2018?
4 Which directorial duo made their feature debut with 1991's *Delicatessen*?
5 Complete the quote: "Soylent Green is ___!"

MEDIUM

1 What are the respective surnames of Kenan and Kel, stars of 1997's *Good Burger*?
2 Which of these is a made-up title? a) *Return Of The Killer Tomatoes!* b) *Killer Tomatoes Strike Back!*; c) *Revenge Of The Killer Tomatoes!*; d) *Killer Tomatoes Eat France!*
3 Which celeb chef plays 'Baker Smurf' in 2017's *Smurfs: The Lost Village*?
4 Vanessa Williams and Vivica A. Fox head up the cast of which 1997 family drama?
5 What's the title of the 2017 Hindi-language remake of Jon Favreau's *Chef*?

HARD

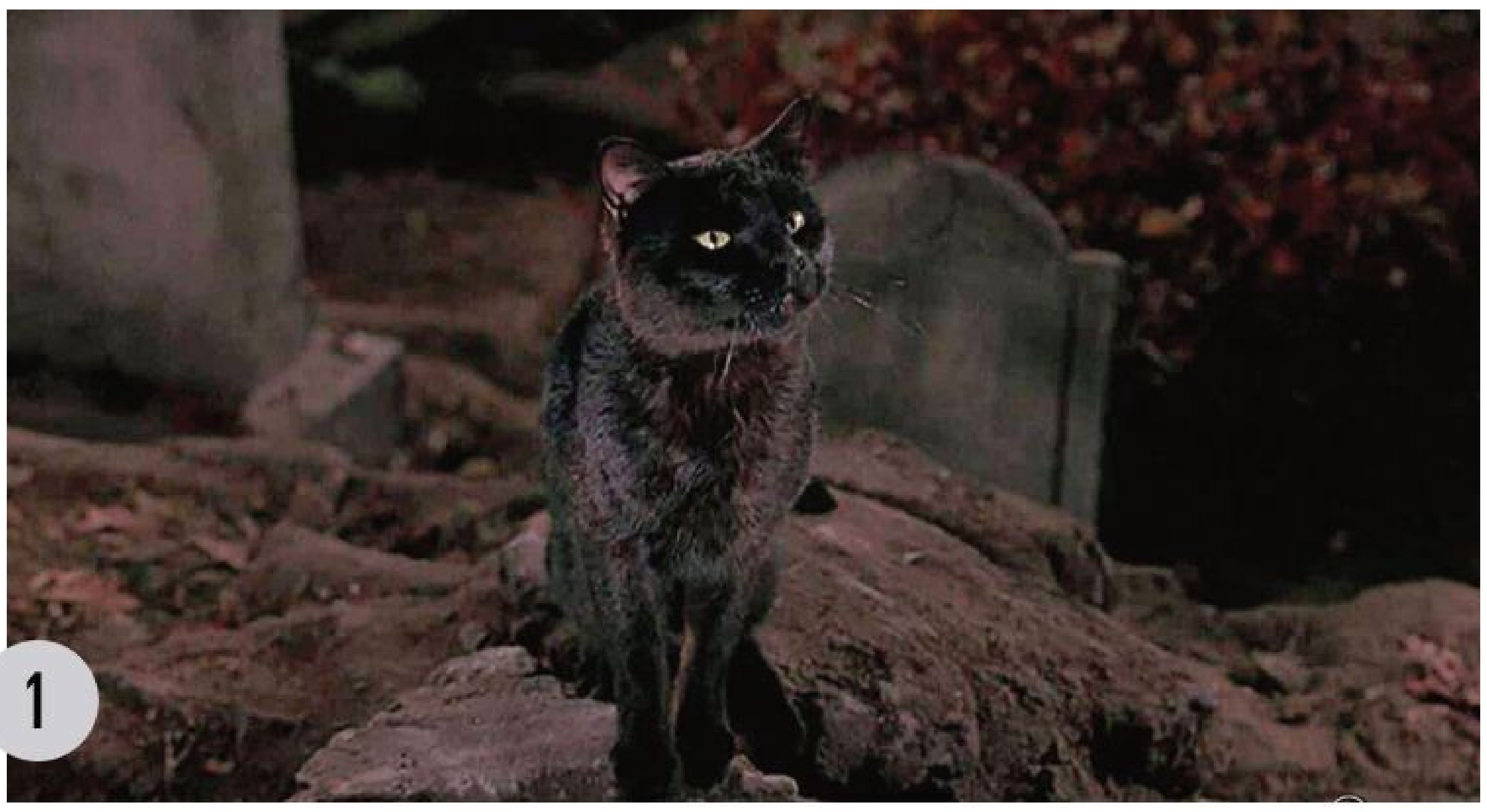
1 What does 'FLDSMDFR' stand for in the *Cloudy With A Chance Of Meatballs* movies?
2 With which actor did Stanley Tucci co-direct 1996's *Big Night*?
3 *My Life As A Courgette* was released under what title in the US?
4 Which 1987 Danish dish won an Oscar for Best Foreign Language Film?
5 Fill in the blanks: **a)** *Mrs Coldicot's ___ War*; **b)** *Sex Lives Of The ___ Men*; **b)** *The ___ ___ Gang* (1975)

PARAMOUNT, DISNEY, SONY

ANSWERS EASY 1. REMY **2.** MCDOWELL'S **3.** ANTHONY BOURDAIN **4.** MARC CARO AND JEAN-PIERRE JEUNET **5.** "PEOPLE" **MEDIUM 1.** THOMPSON AND MITCHELL **2.** C) **3** GORDON RAMSAY **4.** *SOUL FOOD* **5.** *CHEF*
HARD 1. FLINT LOCKWOOD DIATONIC SUPER MUTATING DYNAMIC FOOD REPLICATOR **2.** CAMPBELL SCOTT **3.** *MY LIFE AS A ZUCCHINI* **4.** *BABETTE'S FEAST* **5. A)** CABBAGE; **B)** POTATO; **C)** APPLE DUMPLING

NAME THE FRAME

Can you guess these eight cats and their movies?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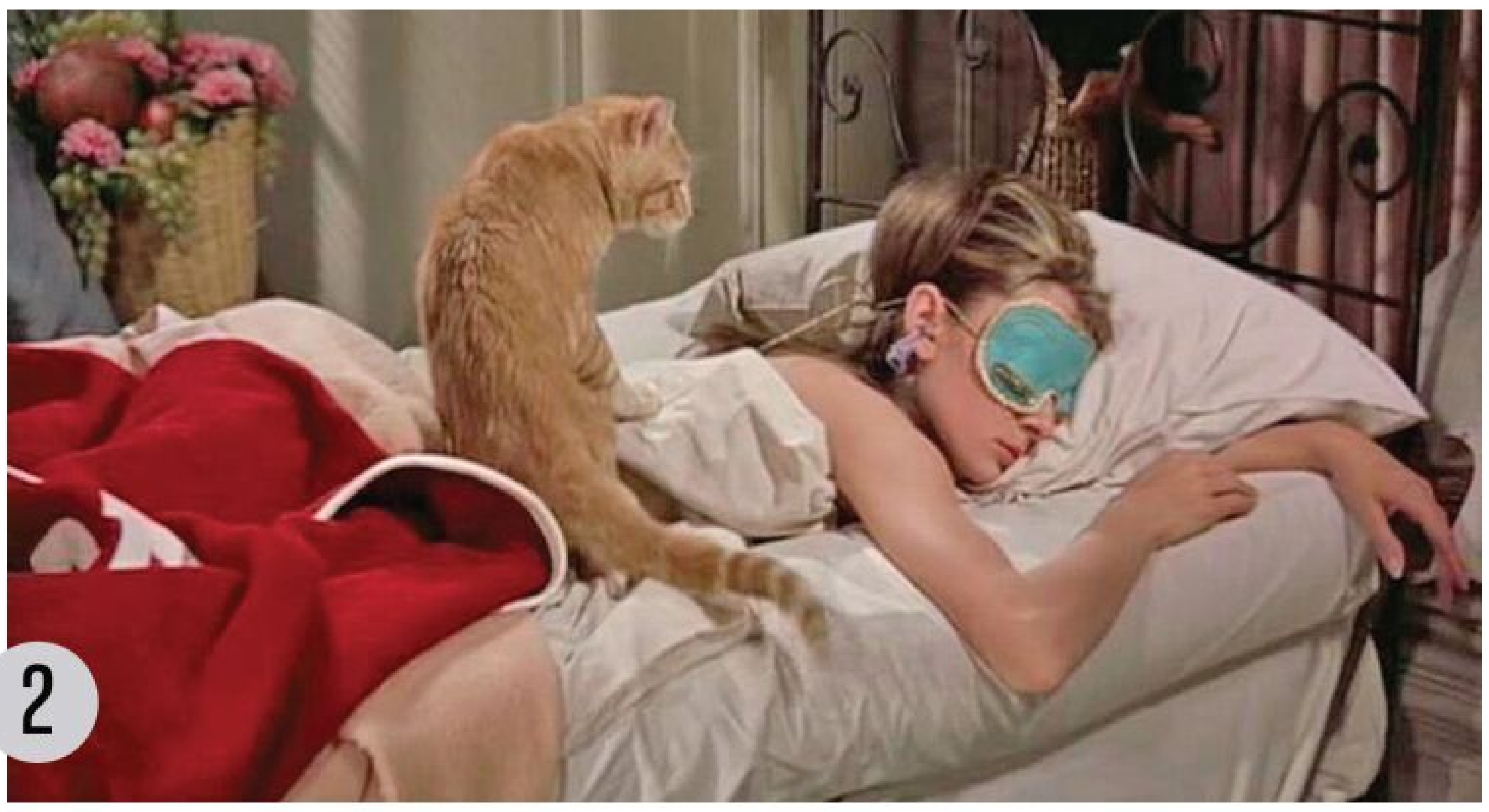
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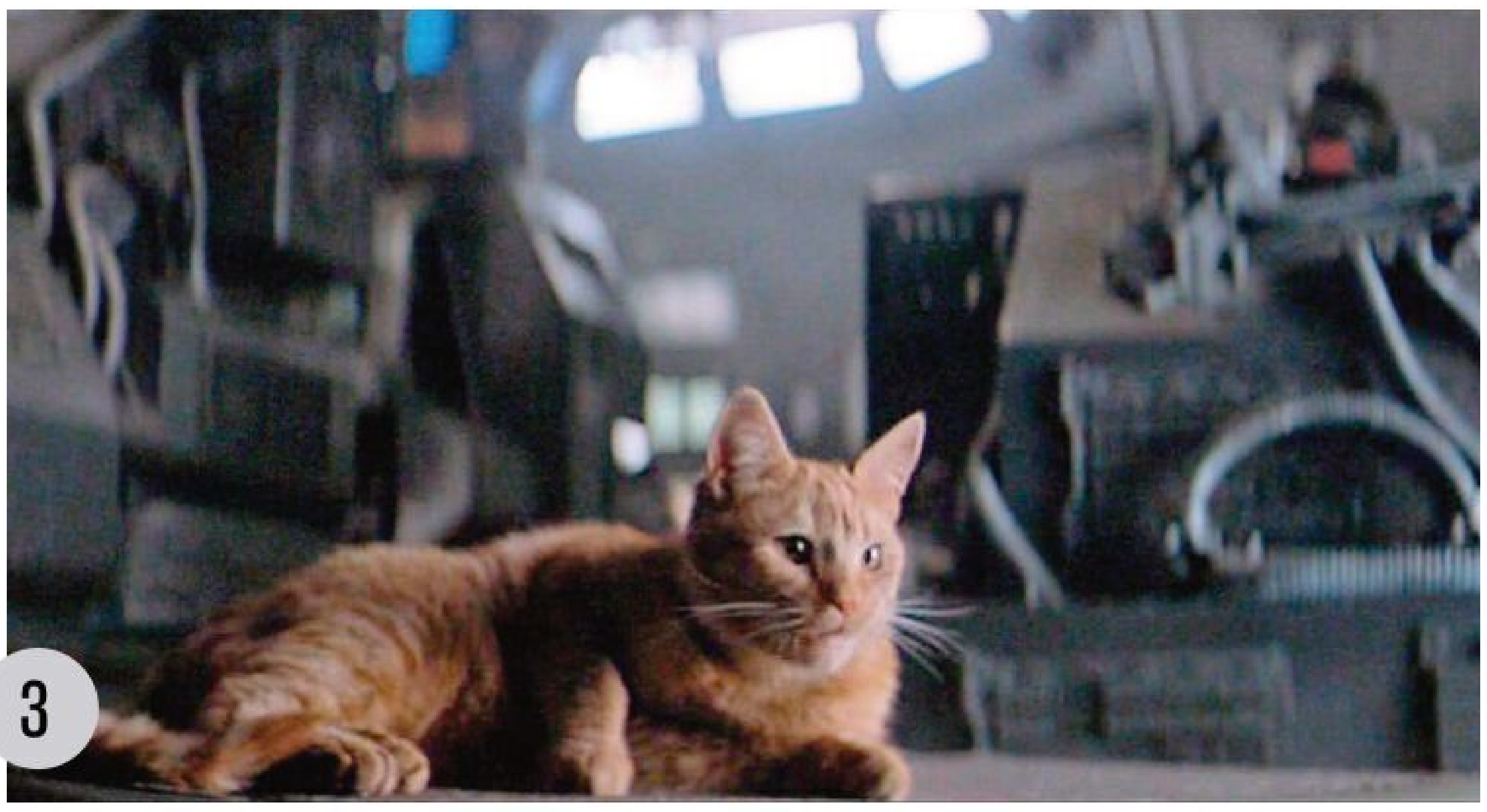
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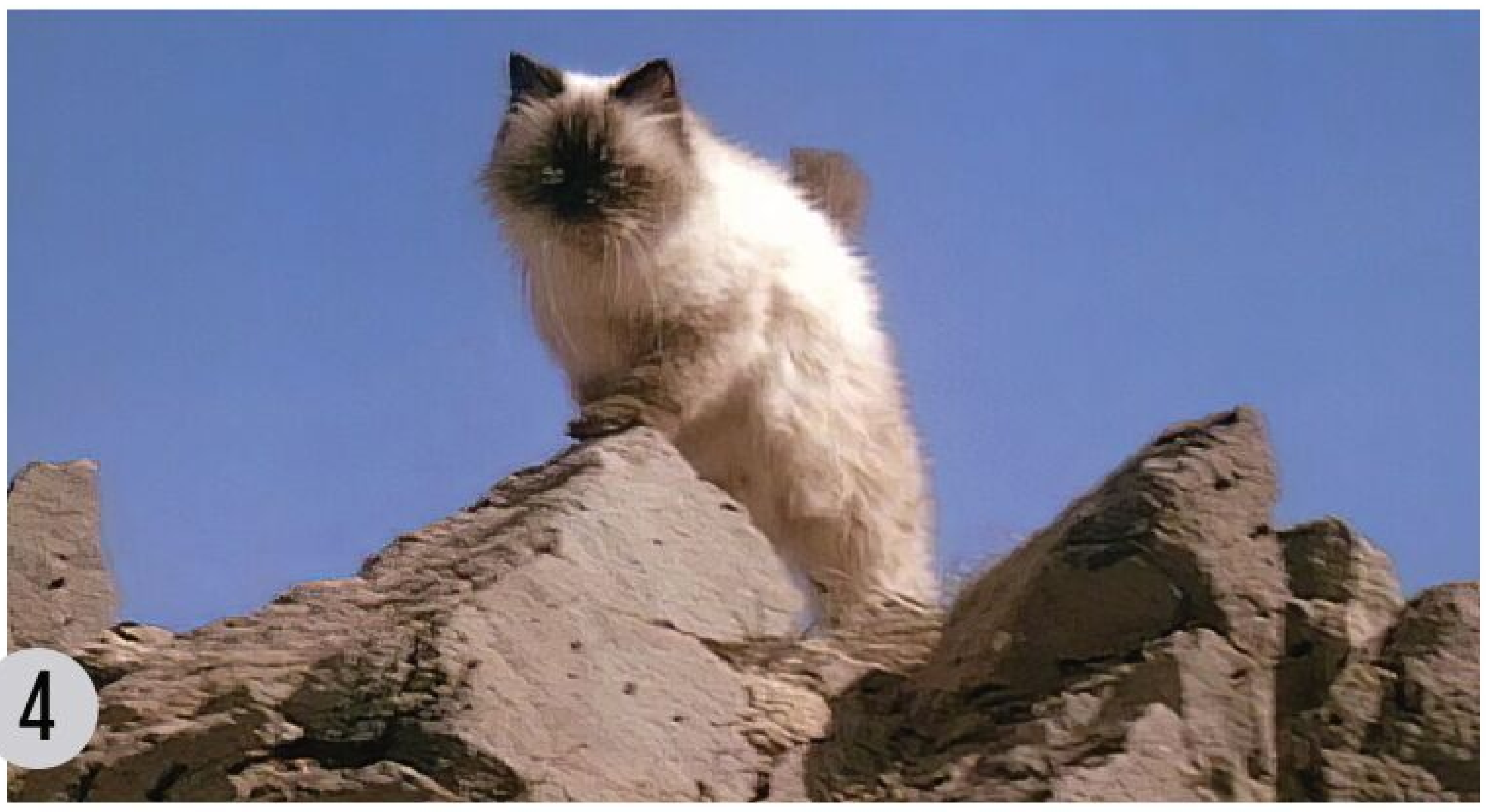
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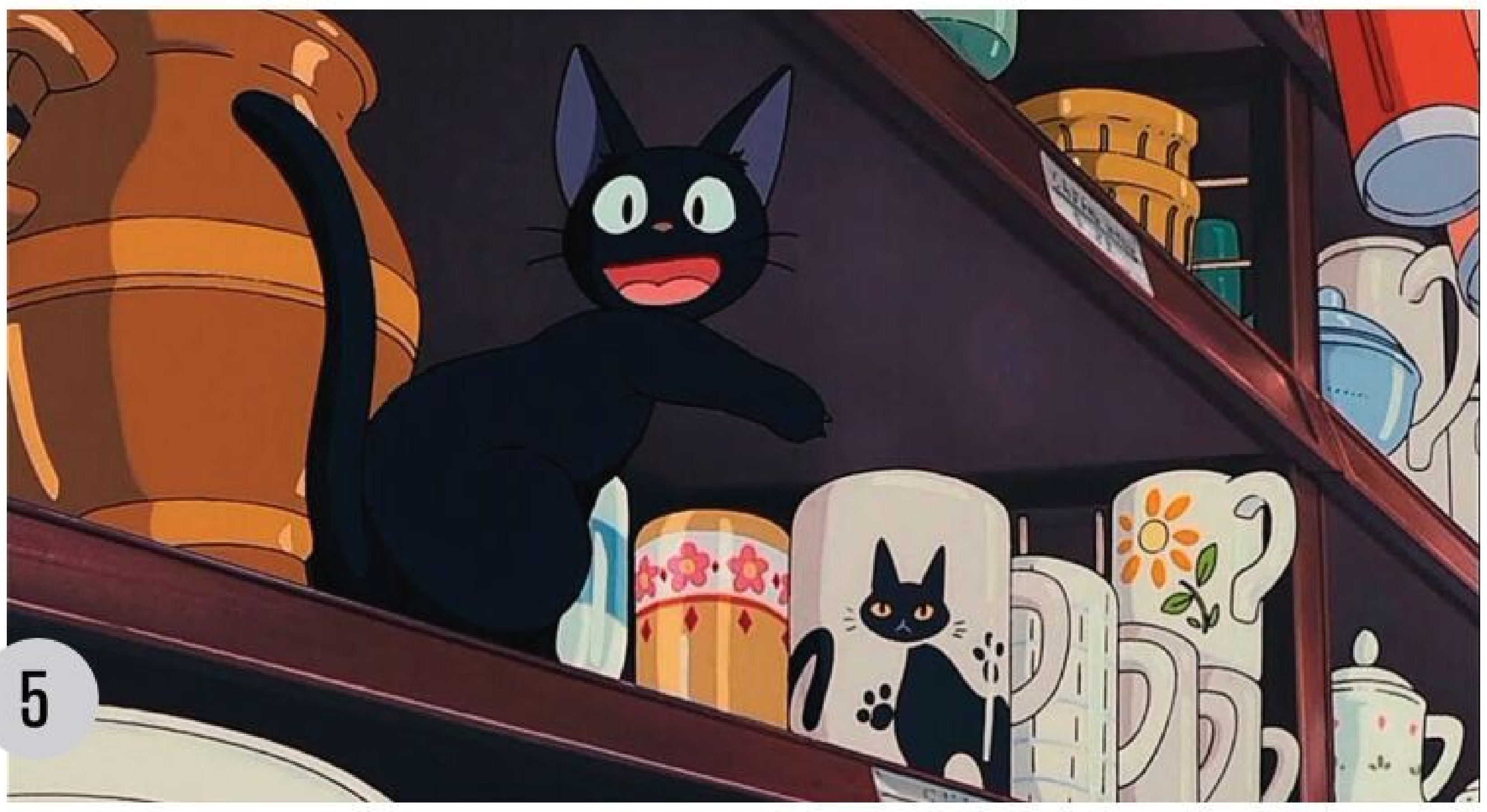
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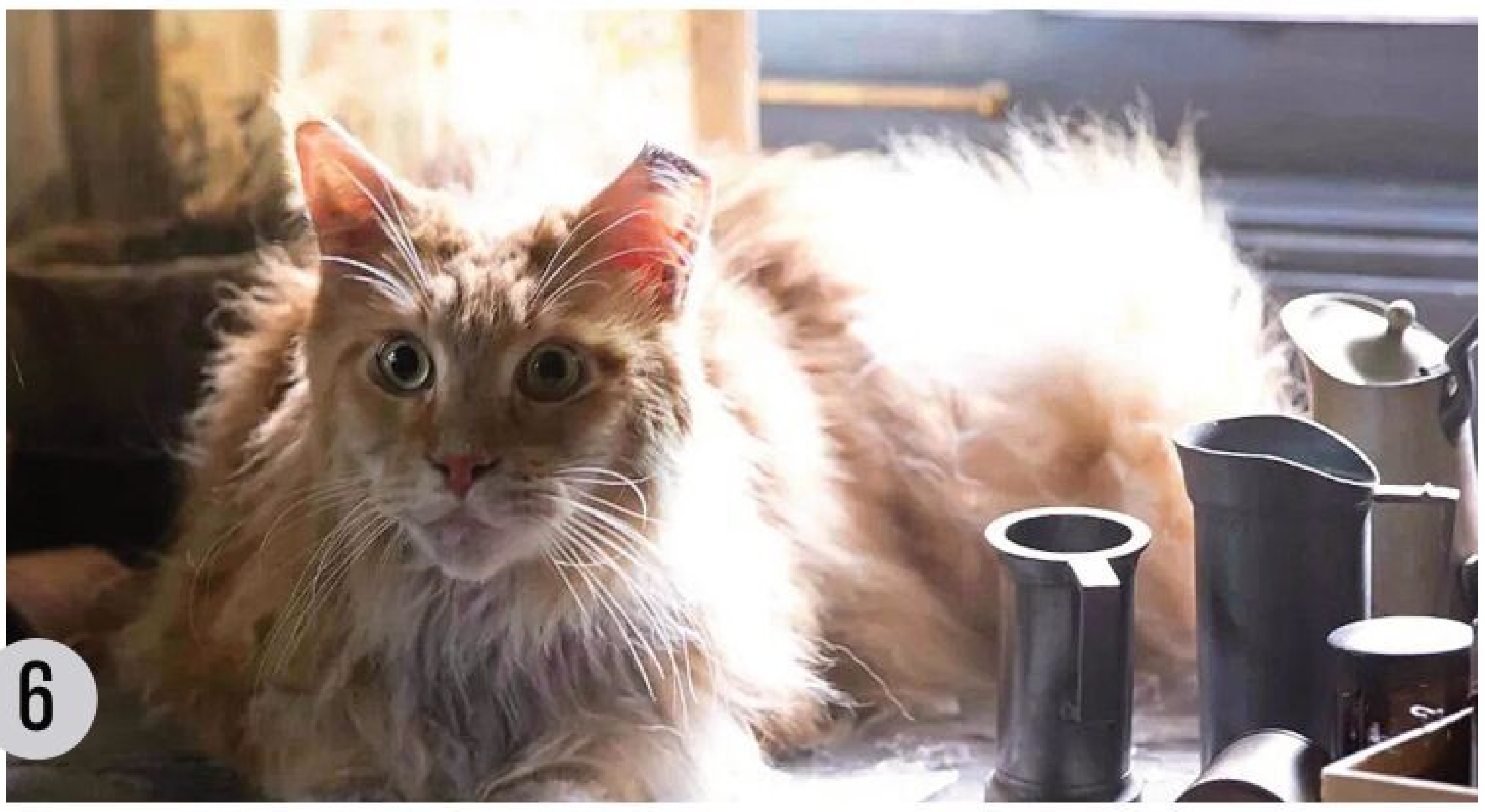
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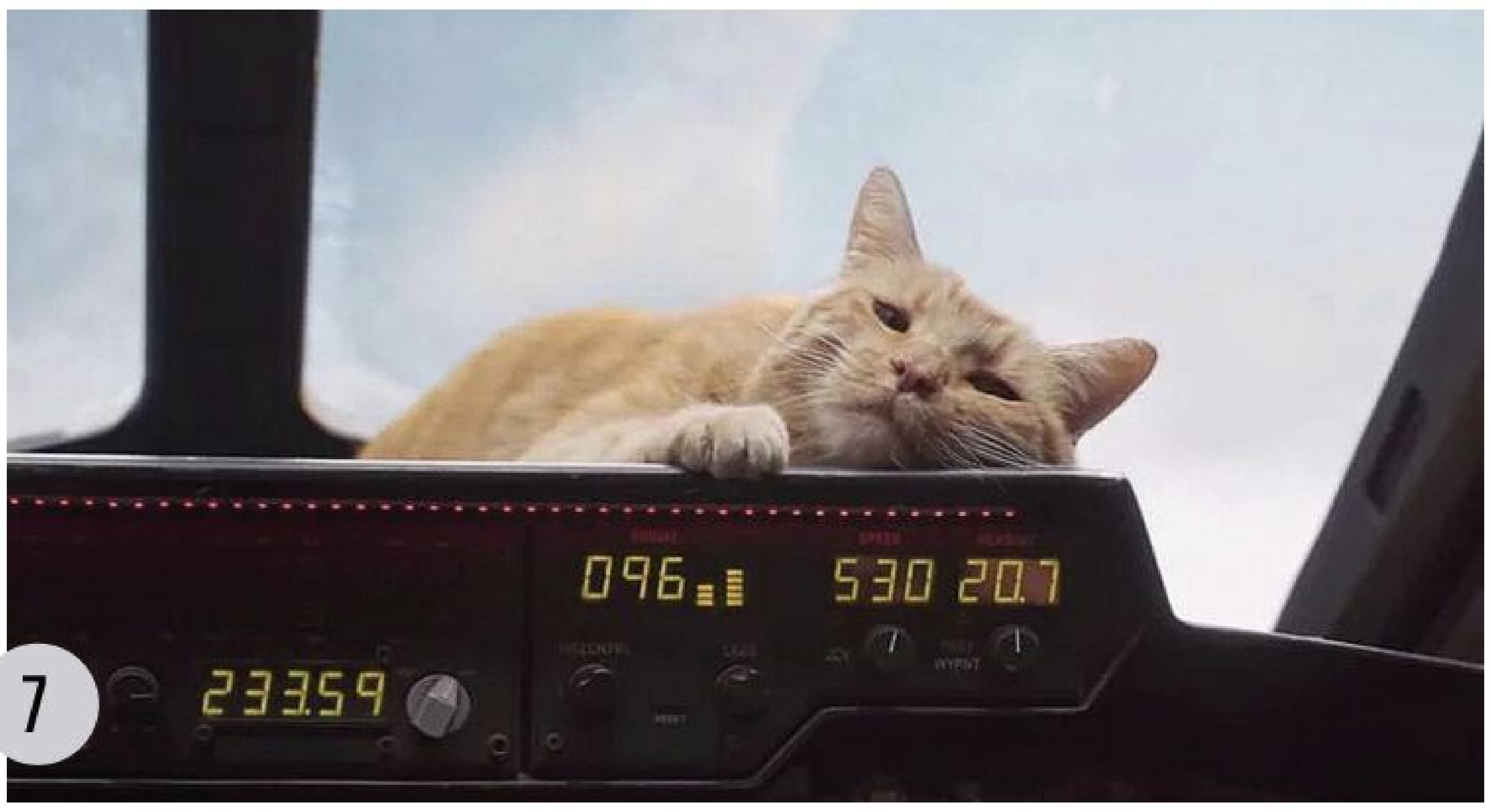

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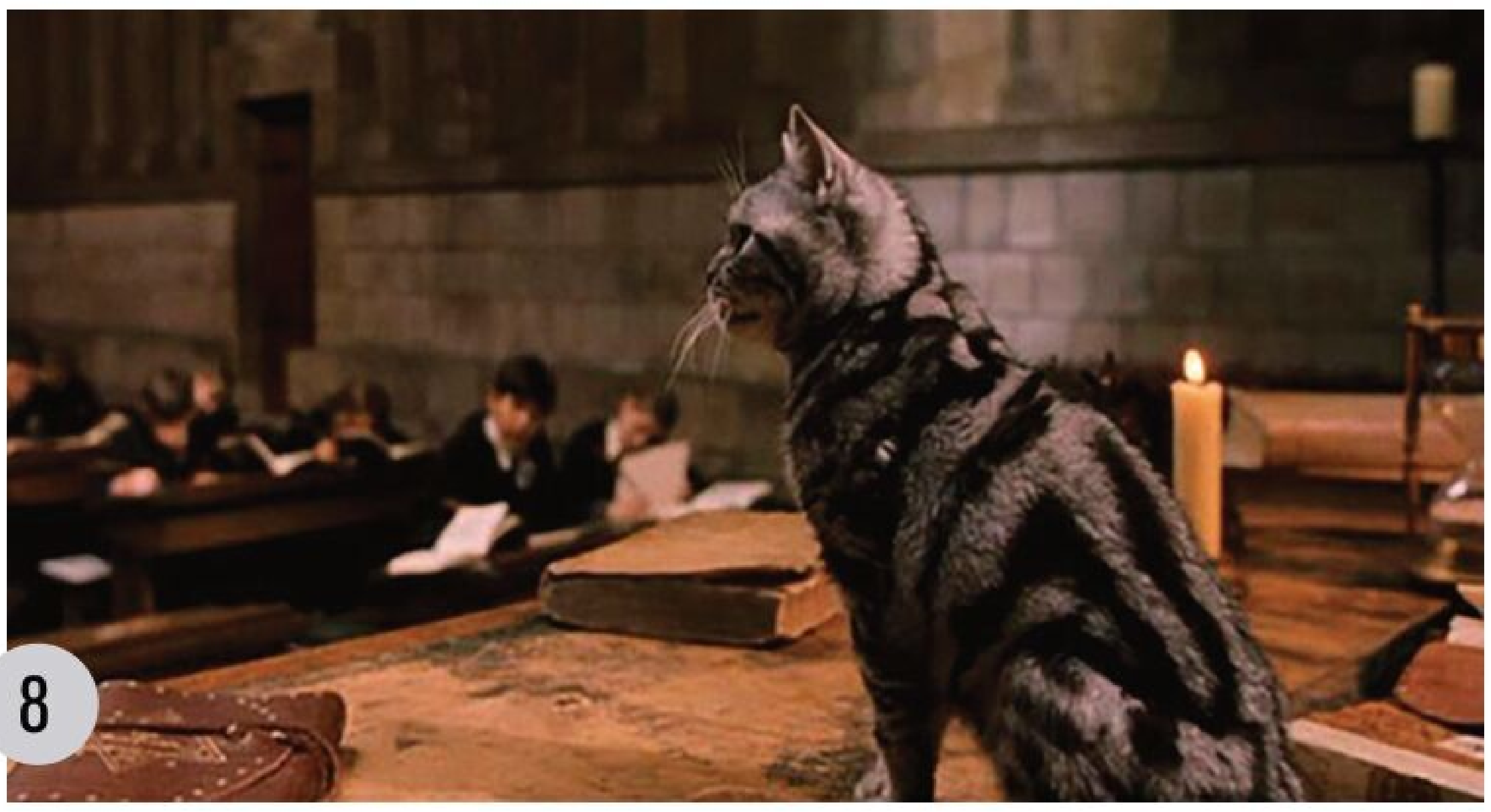
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DISNEY, PARAMOUNT, 20TH CENTURY STUDIOS, STUDIO GHIBLI, LIONSGATE, WARNER BROS

ANSWERS: 1. THACKERY BINX, *HOCUS POCUS* **2.** CAT, *BREAKFAST AT TIFFANY'S* **3.** JONESY, *ALIEN* **4.** SASSY, *HOMEWARD BOUND* **5.** JIJI, *KIKI'S DELIVERY SERVICE* **6.** BUTTERCUP, *THE HUNGER GAMES: CATCHING FIRE AND MOCKINGJAY - PART 1 AND PART 2* **7.** GOOSE, *CAPTAIN MARVEL* **8.** PROFESSOR MCGONAGALL, *HARRY POTTER AND THE PHILOSOPHER'S STONE*

Dialogue

Mail, rants, theories etc.

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★ STAR LETTER

Could the big streaming services set up an initiative with cinemas so that people who have accounts with them could watch the premiere of their latest blockbuster on the big screen? It would mean we still get the cinema experience – and to help keep the cinemas themselves alive, perhaps they impose a rule that every person has to spend £10 on confectionery. Or something to that end.

PETE RENDER, YORK

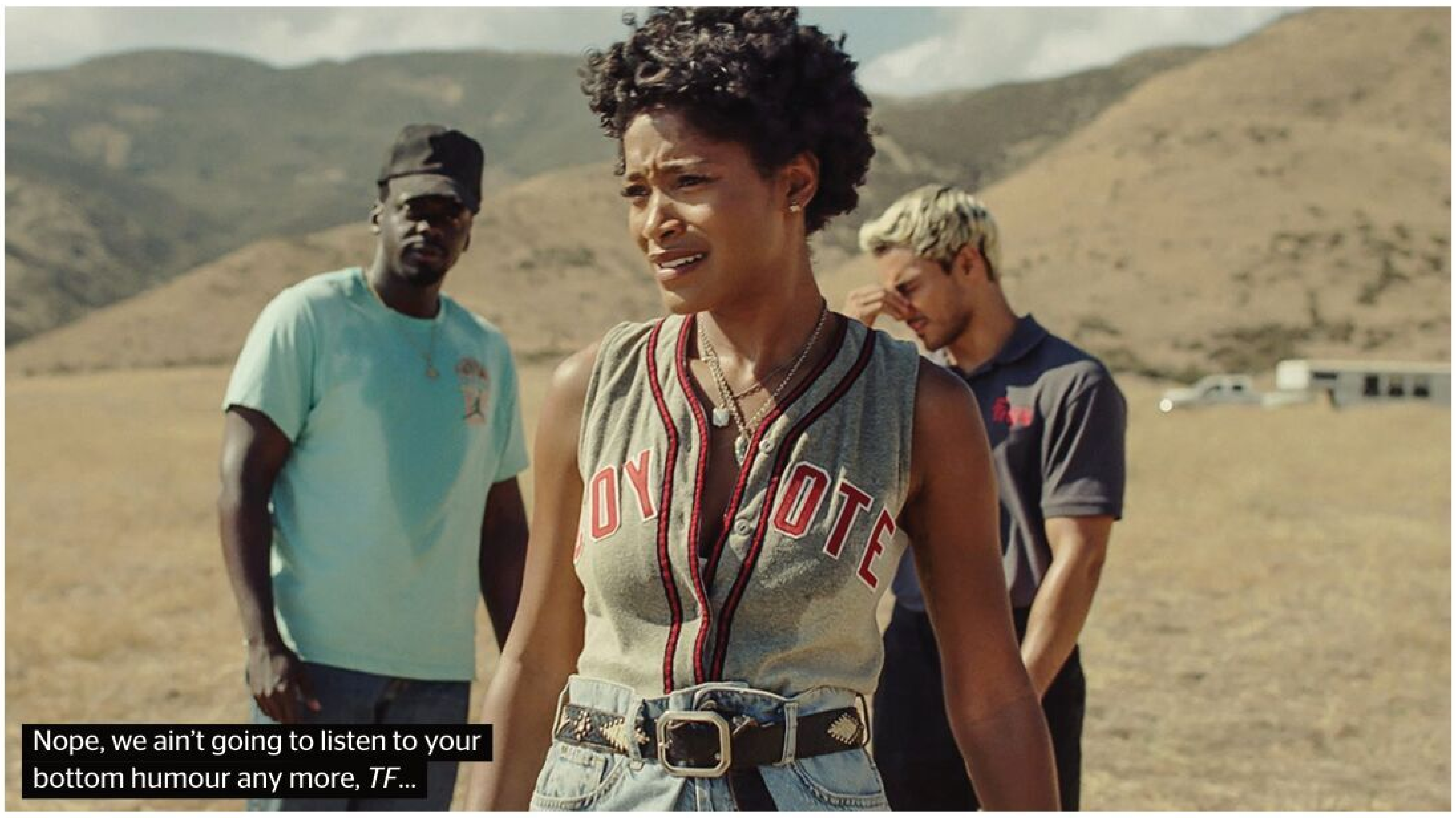
What do you say, big streaming services? You can of course see some of those digi-blockbusters (e.g. *The Gray Man*) at the flicks if you're willing to fork out; we'd quite fancy the option to see everything stream-y at the cinema, from *The Mandalorian* to *Inside The Mind Of A Cat*. Could present a logistical problem in terms of the numbers of screens you'd need… but imagine if they went the whole hog and you got to see your profile icon of Baymax or a *Squid Game* biscuit projected at IMAX scale! Pete and everyone with a letter printed here will receive a copy of *Cobra Kai* S4, available on 17 October on DVD via Sony Pictures Home Entertainment. Didn't send an address? Email it! Type first, type hard, no mercy!

THE CHEEK OF IT

I've just watched *Nope*, which I thought was superb. Top work Mr Peele. However, was it just me or [*SPOILER ALERT!*] did the UFO look like a huge flying bumhole? In the movie the aerial butt crack was described as a UAP. Maybe this stood for 'Unidentified Anal Projectile'. The truth is out there, people…

PHIL SLOAN, BEXLEY

Sounds like you're keen to get to the bottom of it, but we believe that, fundament-ally, Peele's movie is wide open to interpretation. It tochus a while to think of this response.



Nope, we ain't going to listen to your bottom humour any more, *TF*…

@stepdoyle

[*On the* Walking Dead *spin-off's new title*]

"Is it called Flogging A Walking Dead Horse?"

BATS ENTERTAINMENT

I totally dig what Dev Orton was saying about annoying cinema distractions [*see* Dialogue, *issue 328*]. But you know what, there are exceptions to your movie focus being disturbed… I'm on my summer hols in Zakynthos and just watched a late-night screening of *Nope* at the Cine Negas open-air cinema. But unlike Dev's annoyances, I don't think it's possible to turn off the unwanted intrusions you get on the waterfront: the background soundtrack of crashing waves, bats swooping in the night air, the ominously wide and magical expanse of stars overhead… I didn't mind the deckchair seating though.

WAVEY DAVEY, VIA EMAIL

Sounds as if nature was trying to compete with the movie for atmos-building… Did the bats challenge those inflatable air dancers to the world's most uncanny dance-off at any point? Anyone else catch a movie in an exotic, break-from-the-norm setting this summer? On a remote beach? Side of a volcano? In-laws' sitting room?

ALL TEASE

In issue 326 you made a joke about the 2017 *Power Rangers*' end credits threatening a sequel. This got me wondering which other movies have teased a sequel that didn't happen,

WHAT YOU MISSED ON THE POD LAST MONTH

The best courtroom scenes, the worst ageing-up scenes and discussion of everything from wigs to tattoos to the humble custard cream. Plus reviews, impersonations and more… every week!

INSIDE TOTAL FILM

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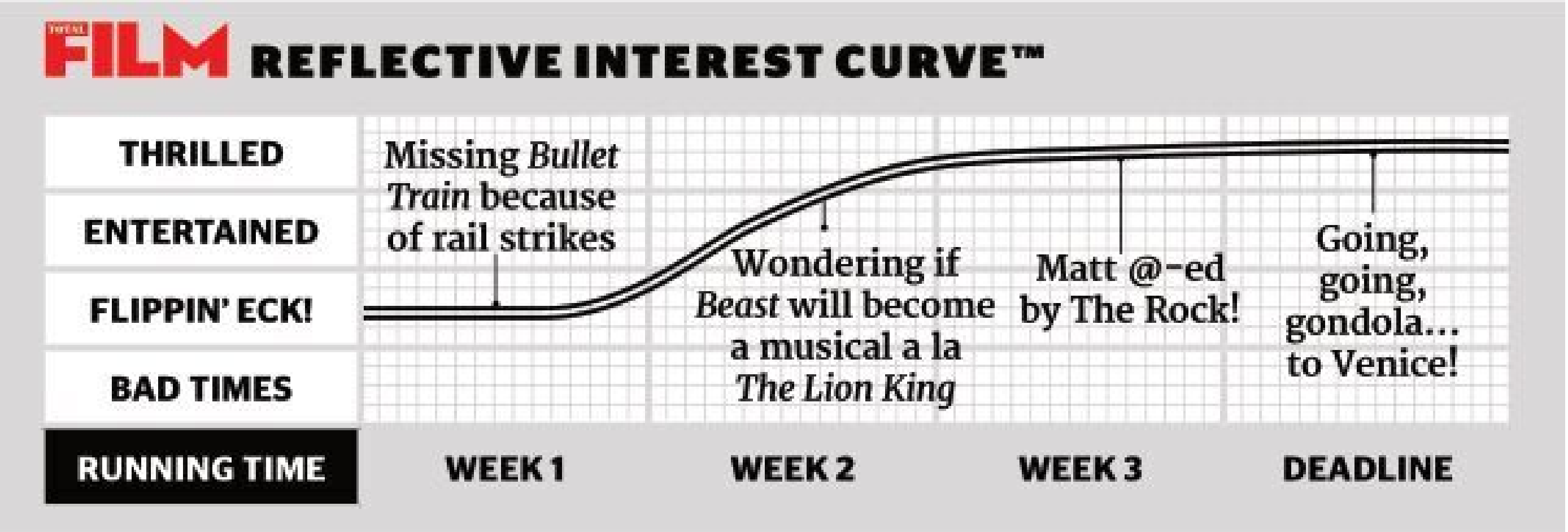


SONY, UNIVERSAL, WARNER

OFFICE SPACED

CHATTER 'GEMS' OVERHEARD IN THE TOTAL FILM OFFICE THIS MONTH...

"Soon as the meeting's over, **this t-shirt's coming off!"** * "I am surprised more guinea-pig owners didn't picket **DC League Of Super-Pets"** * "Oh my God, have you seen that man's tea? **It looks just like... coffee!"**

or is unlikely to. The 2016 version of *Ghostbusters* (via a post-credits scene) and *Solo* spring to mind. What others can anyone think of?

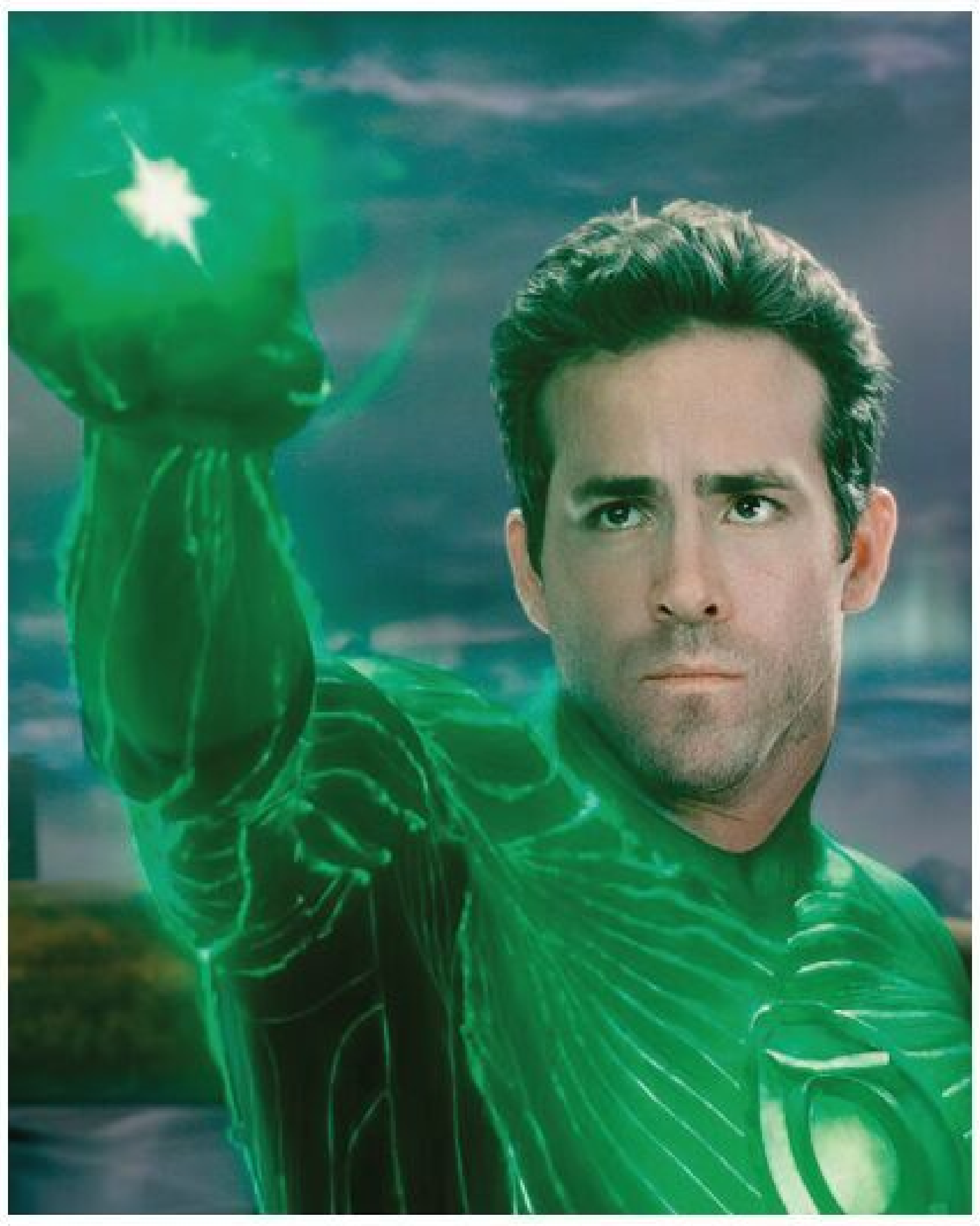
NICHOLAS CLARKE, TORFAEN

It could be the influence of Pete's *Nope* letter (see above), but two that spring to mind involve baddies and their rings: 1980's *Flash Gordon* (mysterious hand, echoey crackle, "The End?") and 2011's *Green Lantern* (Mark Strong's Sinestro sticking his finger where he shouldn't and turning yellow).

KILLER LOOKS

Wow. *Prey* was the surprise of the year so far. Who was expecting a *Predator* film to be so beautifully shot?! Absolutely incredible. Goes to show what you can do with the right people given the space to do their thing. All involved clearly love the first two films and are respectful to fans. This movie was far from one ugly you-know-what.

RUSS TRIBE, SOUTHAMPTON



@lifechance29

[*On* Batgirl *being pulled*]

"Why not do a straight-to-DVD [*release*]... people still buy them you know!"

Indeed – if Terrence Malick did stripped-down, laser-arrow-shooting, alien-vs-grizzly-bear action blowouts, this is what they'd look like. If only earlier spin-offs had taken a similar tack. Picture *Alien Vs. Predator* with competing voiceovers a la *The Thin Red Line*, the antagonists mooching about musing dreamily on God, nature, faces they've skinned, tummies they've erupted out of, etc.

MINOR QUIBBLE

When reviewing films that are aimed at children of a certain age, wouldn't it make sense to have a child within that age group to also give a review? I know some films from Pixar and so on can appeal to both young and old, but when a film is just aimed at five to 10-year-olds, can a 40-year-old really give a review that parents can rely on?

INNES MACNEE, RENFREWSHIRE

Oftentimes our (adult) reviewers attend kid-flick screenings accompanied by young relatives, whose opinions we take heed of. Even when they declare *Minions: The Rise Of Gru* "the most funniest film in one million centuries". As for employing infant critics, aside from child-labour-law issues, we can just imagine the excuses for late copy: "It was nap time"; "my best blue crayon broked"; "I hate you! I do! I wish you weren't my commissioning editor!"

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TOTAL FILM

SPOILER ALERT!

60 SECOND SCREENPLAY

TF SAVES YOU THE COST OF A MOVIE EVERY MONTH. THIS ISSUE: THE GRAY MAN

PPY MOMENT
HAPPY MOMENT
HAPP
23A
24

FADE IN:

INT: PRISON ROOM

BILLY BOB MENTOR recruits prisoner RYAN GOSLING to the CIA because he killed someone once and he has a good sense of humour about it.

BILLY BOB MENTOR

I need people like you to do what the CIA can't. You'll be off-grid and other clichés. You'll be operating in the gray area like some kind of… gray man.

RYAN GOSLING

Really? So you're going to get me out of my prison sentence for murder so that I can commit a lot of murder? Sure.

INT: NIGHTCLUB – 18 YEARS LATER

RYAN GOSLING is now the best assassin in the world, working for REGÉ-JEAN PAGE. He teams up with ANA DE ARMAS to kill a new target.

AGENT FOUR

Before I die, you're Agent Six, right? I'm Agent Four. That's right, Ryan, your boss is the real bad guy. Take this encrypted drive. No, I won't tell you the password.

EXT: FUNERAL, BAKU

RYAN GOSLING goes into hiding. Meanwhile, REGÉ-JEAN PAGE hires psychopathic mercenary CHRIS-TACHE EVANS to track down the drive.

CHRIS-TACHE EVANS

Hey, nice weather we're having. I'm just a friendly guy and… oh God, this is tiresome. I have kidnapped your niece. Tell me where the drive is.

BILLY BOB MENTOR

I literally don't know, but by all means torture me anyway.

RYAN GOSLING gets on an extraction plane but the team all attack him. He kills all of them and then kills the plane mid-air too for good measure. He improbably survives.

CHRIS-TACHE EVANS

Hey, Ryan Six, thanks for taking my call! I have your mentor's niece and I'll kill her if you don't give me the drive.

RYAN GOSLING

Well, this is all working towards an exciting A-list showdown.

INT: APARTMENT, PRAGUE

RYAN GOSLING gets ambushed by CHRIS-TACHE EVANS' team. He improbably survives by killing everyone. He and ANA DE ARMAS drive to Prague.

TRUSTED FRIEND ALFRE WOODARD

Thanks for sending me the drive. I cracked the password straight away somehow. It contains proof that Regé-Jean Page is a bad guy who kills lots of people.

RYAN GOSLING

Oh. Um yeah, we have plenty of proof of that already so this is a bit of a disappointing reveal.

Another team attacks and TRUSTED FRIEND ALFRE WOODARD dies blowing up her apartment. RYAN GOSLING fights all of them on an impossibly high-speed tram. He improbably survives.

ANA DE ARMAS

Well at least that should be all the non-essential bad guys killed off now…

INT: VET'S SURGERY

There is one more non-essential bad guy. He stabs RYAN GOSLING and takes the drive. RYAN and ANA DE ARMAS go to a vet's surgery, because that's what happens in other films.

ANA DE ARMAS

Now that we're having a quiet scene away from you killing loads of guys, why don't you tell me why you were in prison?

RYAN GOSLING

I killed a guy. But it's OK, because he was my dad and I was protecting my brother. Classic sympathetic backstory.

They storm the bad guys' base, killing hundreds more men in the process. BILLY BOB MENTOR also dies. After a fight that lasts an eternity, RYAN GOSLING kills CHRIS-TACHE EVANS.

CHRIS-TACHE EVANS

But wait! We didn't get nearly enough screentime togeth-

RYAN GOSLING

Well, all the city-wide destruction and needlessly violent deaths were worth it as long as we got to put the true bad guys away.

INT: OFFICE

REGÉ-JEAN PAGE destroys the drive and just gets a bit of a telling off from his boss. Meanwhile, RYAN GOSLING takes BILLY BOB MENTOR's niece on the run with him, ready for the sequel.

RYAN GOSLING

I can't wait to see what I will improbably survive next!

FIN

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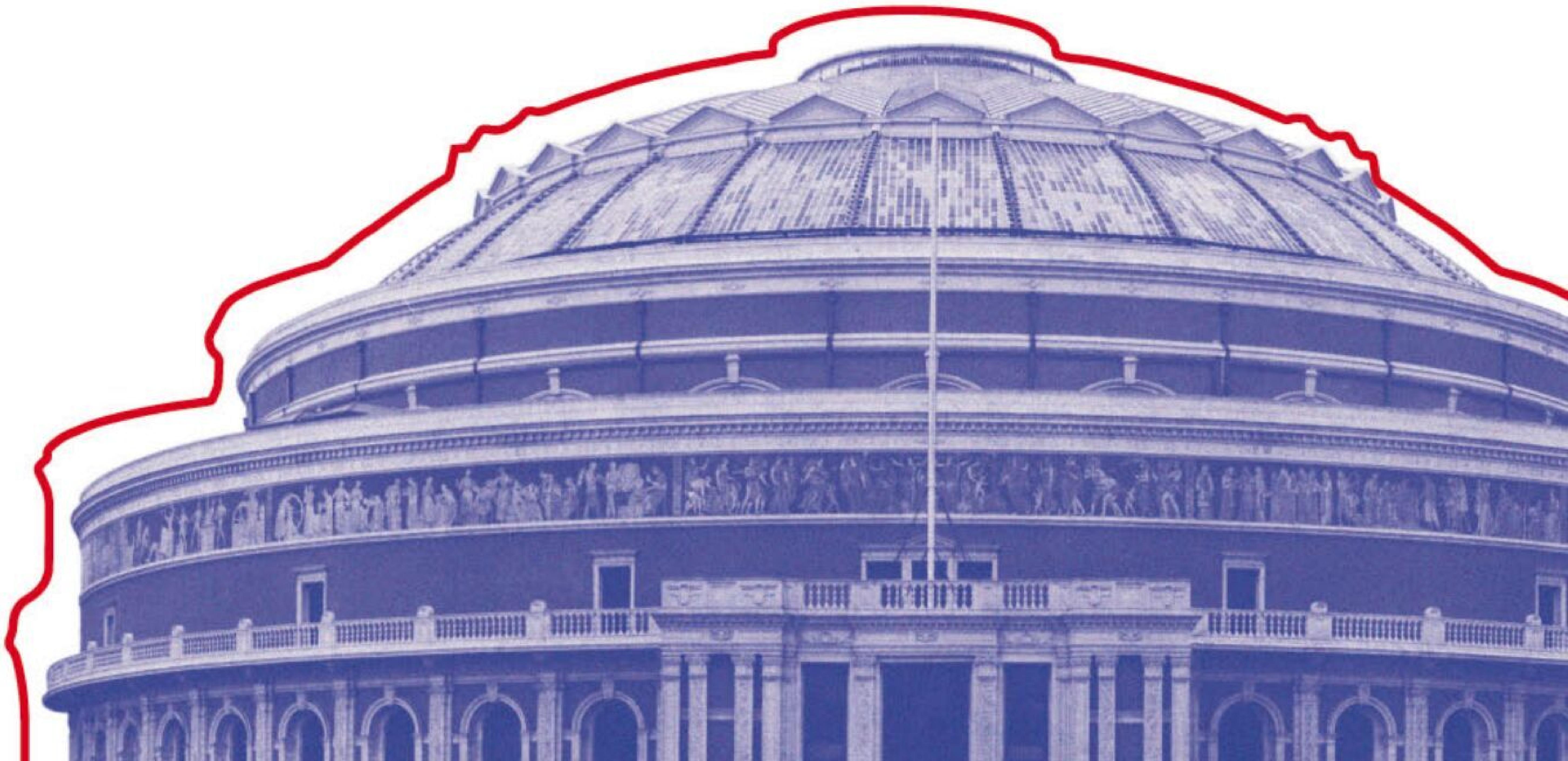

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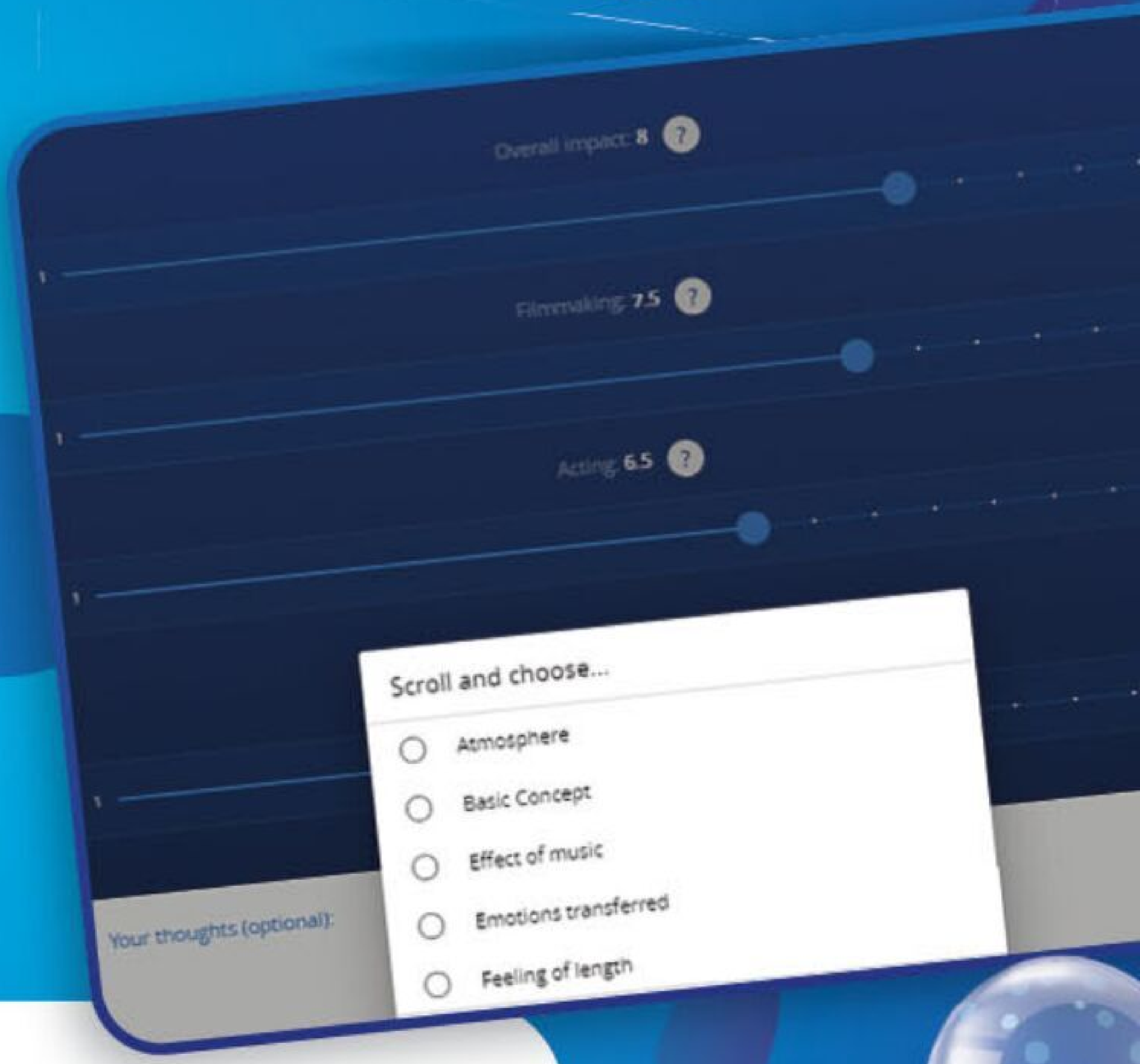

Overall impact: 8

Filmmaking: 7.5

Acting: 6.5

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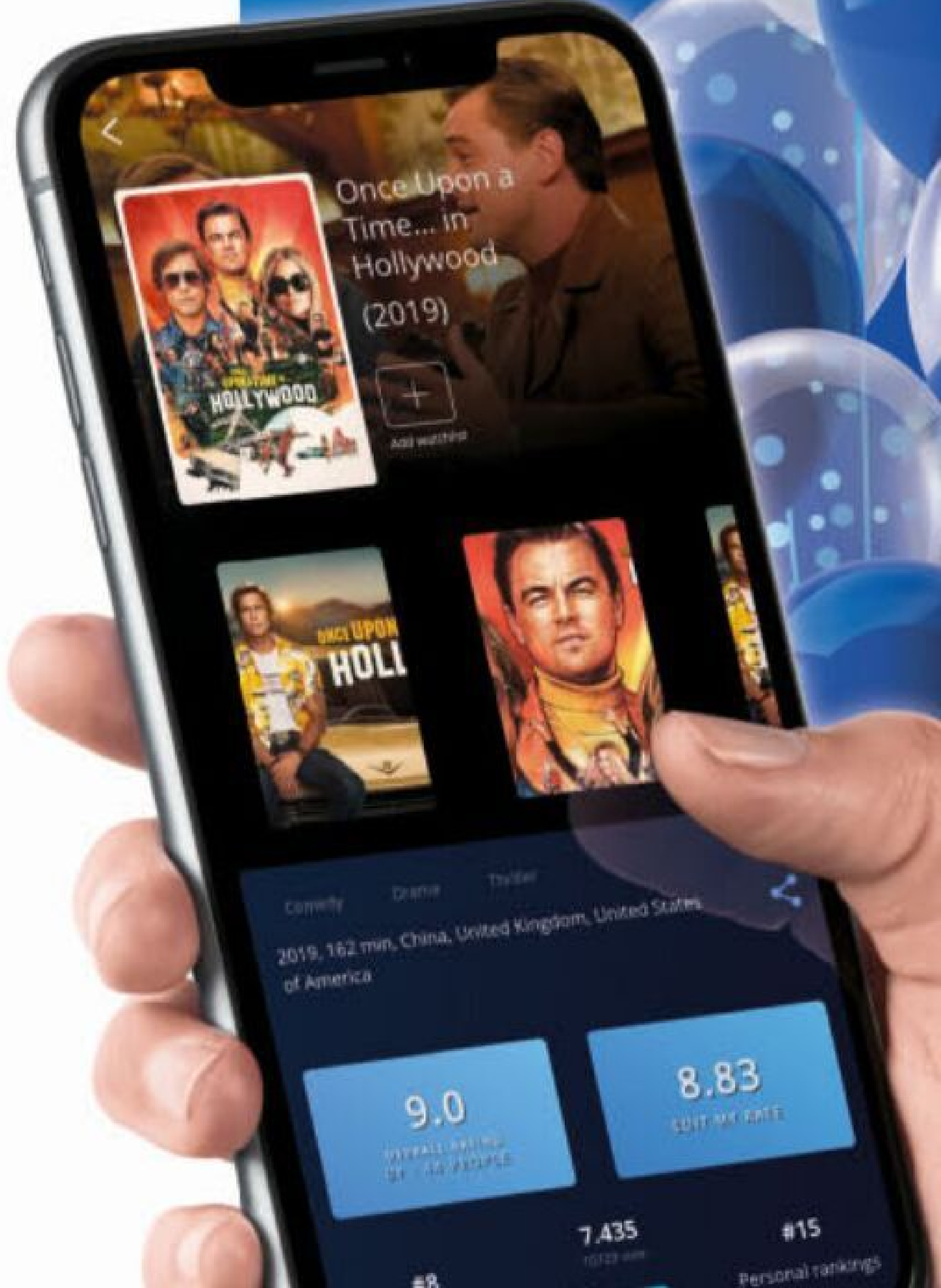
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